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LITERARY AIMS AND ART

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LITERARY AIMS AND ART

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TO

JESSIE HURD STEEVES

PREFACE

THE purpose of this volume is to present the fundamentals of literary art and the distinguishing features of the important literary types. It does not attempt to offer a critical philosophy or to deal spaciously with æsthetic questions. For the maturer or more interested student, however, brief book-lists appended to the various chapters will suggest possibilities of further study.

Since this book is designed first of all to meet the needs of college students, the illustrative matter referred to or quoted has been taken in the main from works commonly read and discussed in high school or college — or at least easily available in anthologies or in small library collections. Within so designedly brief a treatment of literary types as this is, it is of course difficult to carry discussion of any topic very far beyond the point of useful suggestion. The only departure from this principle will be found in the analyses of novels and plays given in the closing pages of the chapters on fiction and drama. Possibly these analyses may seem to trespass upon the teacher's ground; but they can scarcely be either useless or harmful — educationally speaking — and they should serve to clarify the

discussion of those literary concepts which clearly need to be applied to things written.

In the making of this book I have contracted very real obligations to Professor Oscar James Campbell, of the University of Michigan, Professor James Holley Hanford, of the same institution, Professor Emery Neff, of Columbia, and Mrs. Mabel Hurd Willett, of the Central High School, Washington, D.C., all of whom have read the manuscript and given me highly valuable advice and suggestions.

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Sir William Watson, *Lachrimae Musarum, A Study in Contrasts.*

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FIRST CONSIDERATIONS

We take our literature, like most things, more seriously today than our forefathers did. It is hard to believe that those who listened to an ancient Greek or Anglo-Saxon bard troubled themselves to analyze the effect he exerted upon them, or debated the principles of his art. They knew how strongly he touched their emotions, how truthfully he echoed their sense of life; and they gave him credit for these things with the simple explanation that he was inspired. Today the immense broadening of the reading public, the advanced education of a large part of it, and a more critical habit of mind, have brought about another condition. A thinking reader today is not satisfied to know that a play or story interests him or adds something to his knowledge of life. He wants to know what it is in the author and in his method that produces these results. We talk now of the "study" of literature, because analysis, comparison, and generalization as to the things we read are an accepted part of our processes of mental growth; and few readers of any breadth of experience are satisfied, or able, possibly, to read without some exercise of their minds upon the question of the relation between the writer and themselves.

That relation is at bottom simply conceived. The writer, we know, must provide us with diversion, with something to hold our minds and feelings, and to stir and refresh them. That diversion need not, frequently does not, consist in our receiving merely pleasant impressions, however, for throughout the whole history of our race we find that the deepest and most searching emotional impressions may come from those representations of experience in which the soul is submerged in trouble, obliged to overcome it or to sink. But whether the view of life conveyed in any piece of writing be happy or unhappy, it must definitely and forcefully interest us, which means that it must engage and hold our emotional selves.

Reading and experience. — All our reading is vicarious experience — something we live through in another personality. Of course few of us really identify ourselves with the characters of the men and women we meet in a story or play, but we are affected by and subject to their experiences much as we are by similar experiences undergone by our friends. Such relations increase not only our knowledge of life, but the zest of living. We enjoy and need conversation because it increases the number of our contacts with life. We enjoy and need books for the same reason, but in books we find that the imagination and the artistic skill of the writer are focussed upon moving and significant things, while the greater part of our talk touches casual things briefly, with little force of imagination, and certainly

with less artistic skill than the trained writer commands.

Emotional appeal. — Now the focus of interest in all these added contacts with life is, as we have said, our feelings, first of all and always. For most of us the current of life is not normally disturbed by experiences that touch us very deeply, but books give us an immense number and variety of experiences that our own environment and social inhibitions would prevent our knowing at first hand. We like to know what people have done in other countries and in other times, or in other corners of our own social life. There is, of course, the makings of a detective, a soldier, a lover in every one of us, but our occupations and obligations have compelled us to move in other grooves of life. There is a morsel of actual truth, even, in the adage that every man has committed a murder — in his heart. It is the craving of the soul for experience that makes us seek the effects of experience in the representation of a life that we cannot touch, or can touch only occasionally or feebly. The rarer and more penetrating the experience, the more, generally speaking, we are drawn to it. We like our emotions to be exhilarated even when the stimulus is a painful one. No one would wish the fate of King Lear or Desdemona for himself or his friends, but within his own mind he finds pleasure in sharing their trials. His feelings are taken out and exercised, so to speak, while he is actually secure from the shock of events. Whether

the situation opened to us is pleasant or painful, then, it is the "feel of it" first of all that anchors our interest in it. A character in an old Roman comedy said, "I am a human being; nothing human seems foreign to me." That is the essence of our interest in reading.

Literature and life. — Yet beyond the claim of mere interest we recognize other purposes and other appeals in literature. Not all of us are satisfied; and none of us are satisfied forever, with the mere stimulation of our sensations. A very little experience in reading compels us to look for more enduring and significant qualities in books if they are to take an effective hold upon our minds. They must not only take us out of the rut of day to day existence and satisfy our desires for change and movement; they must impress us with a sense of the significance of the things they depict. They must really discover life for us in some more expansive way than we can discover it for ourselves. We are likely to feel this significance in either of two ways — by our recognition of the actuality of the experience that is depicted, or by our belief that it brings us something desirable, but lacking in ordinary life. To put it in other words, a book of lasting importance will be found to view life with either a convincing reality or a pleasurable or strengthening ideality. We hear both of these characteristics referred to as "truth to life," but needless to say neither contains an absolutely complete truth, since one is truth to experi-

ence, and the other is truth to our interpretations of experience, or possibly even to our sense of the incompleteness of experience. When the aim of a literary work is adherence to the facts of life, we call it realistic; when it is the idealization or glorification of these facts, or an explicit departure from the routine of real experience, we call it romantic.

Realism and romanticism. — Generally speaking, the difference between romantic and realistic writing is one which takes in the entire substance and treatment of the work in question. The difference is first of all a matter of general outlook. We say that Thackeray and Arnold Bennett are realistic because their novels present life with the intention of truth to its general conditions and happenings. We call Scott romantic because, as he was only slightly concerned with the realities of his own time, he created a society of adventurous heroes and exquisite heroines who ornamented his pageant of medieval chivalry, but whose persons and environment recall little that touches our own experience. We call Stevenson romantic because his stories are stories of stirring action in strange scenes, peopled by extraordinary and vivid characters. We call Barrie's *Peter Pan* and *Dear Brutus* romantic primarily because they give us scenes and characters that lie altogether outside human experience. They are modern magic-stories in fact. Stories of mystical burden are also romantic, since they deal with a sphere of experi-

ence which transcends reason.* Such are Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*, in which an old but weakened family decays with its ancient dwelling, Algernon Blackwood's *Temptation of the Clay*, in which a subtle and delicate intimacy with nature is tragically violated, and Maurice Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas and Mélisande*, in which the characters seem to move in altogether another spiritual realm.

The literature of primitive peoples is prevailingly romantic; we find their fables, their songs, their epics, colored by a fanciful view of life, dominated by hero-worship, helped out by magic and the intervention of the gods. Commonplace happenings are not for them. Even their tales that originate in actual occurrences and that deal with actual people undergo a process of glorification. Their life is primarily an emotional life; so in their artistic reproduction of it, emotion precedes reason. This is the essence of romanticism — to see life as something more kindly, more noble, or more thrilling than common experience would show it to be. On the other hand, realism implies, in the very definition of the word, an examination of life for the purpose of finding its typical facts. It appeals less to the fancy than to reason. It is therefore a product of more

* "Mystical" is not to be confused with "mysterious." The mystical is concerned with spiritual ideas and values, employing the characters and happenings of a more or less actual world as symbols for ideas that are too volatile to be depicted accurately and clearly. The sense of the word can be best gathered from the tone and atmosphere of any of the examples mentioned.

advanced culture, and it is directed to minds that are dissatisfied with an unreflective view of life.

The general tendency in the romantic interpretation of life is to increase interest by intensification and compression. That is, more exciting things than common, happen with greater rapidity of development than is really usual. There is a natural inclination, too, to make the distortion of common experience favorable rather than unfavorable to the principal characters introduced. But life is also most dramatic when it is most unhappy, so romantic exaggeration takes this direction too. And since one's final judgment of a story or play is likely to be determined primarily by the nature of the conclusion, the romantic mood develops two types of conclusions — one the "happy ever after" ending, the other tragic. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* illustrates one type of ending; *Macbeth* or *Hamlet* the other.

Realism, on the other hand, as a deliberate denial of either the truth or the usefulness of romantic exaggeration, views the whole current of action in a matter-of-fact way, and does not work consistently toward striking conclusions, since it holds that the logic of everyday life does not move toward dramatic settlements of even crucial problems. The realist is naturally, therefore, more interested in situations and incidents that do not interrupt the current of life, but are part of it. He sees life not as a dramatic succession of imposing acts by vivid characters

tending toward a logical or moral conclusion, but as a mingling of people, events, and influences both good and bad, and many that are not actively either good or bad, yet which have their clear effects upon character and action. It is almost naturally true, too, that since the realistic method is first of all a negation of the romantic bias, it should oppose an irrationally optimistic view of life. Yet realism is not in itself pessimistic; it simply requires that vice, pain, and frustration be given their due importance in any representation of human destinies.

Another set of typical contrasts is to be found in the fact that the romanticist, interested as he is in life of an eventful and striking sort, is inclined to be concerned with action rather than with the close study of character. It is implicit in the realist's view, on the other hand, that men and their ways and characters are of greater significance than those external and sometimes violent forces, with which the romanticist deals.

In another sense the term " romantic " is opposed to " classic." From time to time we find in the history of literature, periods in which everything is subordinated to principles, and in which such words as " taste " and " style " are applied to a particular manner, tone, or form of writing. In Addison's essays, which are typically formal in treatment and " correct " in phrase, we find this point of view, also in Pope's verse-satire, written consistently in the " heroic couplets " of his day. Sooner or later

newer writers break away from such formulas of taste, and assert once more the individuality of the artist. The character of this change may be seen in a contrast of Lamb's essays with Addison's, and of Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* with Pope's *Rape of the Lock*.

In all literature, then, we see a recurring opposition of two ruling ideas — the romantic, with its attendant optimism, emotional appeal, ideality, temperamental and individualistic freedom, its elation and adventurousness, — and the realistic, with its cautious inquiry, its subjection of emotion to reason, its constant concern with the actual relations between the individual and his social environment, and its general insistence upon facts as the basis of any sincere and profitable study of life.

It would be wrong to presume, however, that the opposition of the romantic and the realistic points of view in literature would place all writers in either one class or the other. As a matter of fact, and especially in the narrative forms of our discriminating age, certain limits of probability keep fancy in check; and it may be only in special aspects of his work that an author is romantic, while the general complexion of his work may be realistic. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, for instance, is in its theme splendidly romantic — the story of a solitary man challenging rough nature for the means of life. But in the sense that the penetrating conviction of this story is due almost wholly to Defoe's prosaic building up of the details

of Crusoe's hard existence on a remote island, bit by bit and day by day, with mistakes and disappointments to balance moments of good fortune and hope — in this sense, the story is realistic, producing its effect by severe, unpretending nearness to life. To call Defoe either romanticist or realist would therefore be to pronounce an imperfect judgment; for he is definitely both in these two separate respects. Dickens may serve as another example. He shows a fairly faithful adherence to the general course of life, but both his characters generally and his situations at times, are extravagantly handled. Yet in the early part of his career he was regarded as a realist because of his strong personal reaction against the chivalric romanticism of Sir Walter Scott. In our more recent fiction we have progressed so far in the direction of a literal transcription of life that perhaps no one would think today of calling Dickens a realist.

After all, the realist can never reproduce life perfectly, for he cannot reproduce all of it; he cannot reduce it to the level of complete conviction, because the most convincing thing about actual life is the infinite number of commonplace events and contacts that make up a day's work and play. The most that the realist can do is to select the characters and situations that seem to him to serve best as types of men and life; and his selection differs only in degree, as a rule, from the romanticist's choice of material depicting life with more than the average sharpness. At best, then, our terms "romantic" and "realis-

tic " can only be vague, because they will always be relative.

Naturalism. — In the domain of realism we have come to use the word " naturalistic " * to denote the effect of reality gained by the closest possible reproduction of the events, characters, and conversation of quite normal life. Naturalism as a literary idea has been only recently formulated and practiced in English literature; so early instances of it are rather rare. Yet Defoe's narrative method in *Robinson Crusoe*, with its careful day-to-day record of occurrences, is in the main naturalistic. Arnold Bennett's or Theodore Dreiser's minute truth to circumstance illustrates it in its contemporary handling.

Matter and manner. — We have been dealing so far with that large problem of the author's treatment of the people and events which constitute the actual *matter* of the life with which he deals. The problem is one, essentially, of his philosophy; of his general outlook upon life. There is a further interest, however, in his literary manners, the kind of personal understanding that he establishes with his readers,

* The history of the word " naturalistic " is an interesting example of the break-down of specific distinctions in meaning through general use. Originally (with Zola) it implied the determination of man's destiny by the influence of the forces of nature — heredity and environment. Today it is used almost exclusively to carry the force of the word " natural " only in its very lowest sense — that is, the thing normally likely to happen. In our discussion we shall accept this later and commoner sense, and take the word " deterministic " to cover the earlier conception.

what was implied in the old and still accepted term "style." Two men may cover the same facts in quite different ways. Their stories differ in appeal not because they are different stories, but because they are different men who tell them. So it is evident in the simplest stages of literary creation that the qualities of interest in a work embrace not only what the work deals with, but the personality through which it reaches us.

Style. — The question of style is often discussed more gravely than need be; for fundamentally style is nothing more than literary manner. The French say: "Style is the man." In most cases it is not something which the writer either can or would put on and off like a coat, though it often does involve a deliberate adaptation of the author's form of speech to the nature of the feeling which he has to convey. We can see instantly that the general difference between Wordsworth's style and Milton's is one which depends upon Wordsworth's simple rendering of simple episodes, and Milton's imposing and solemn utterance of grand truths.

Here is part of one of Wordsworth's shortest lyrics:

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!

Contrast this with the opening lines of the Second Book of *Paradise Lost.*

> High on a throne of royal state, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
> Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
> Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
> Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
> To that bad eminence; and from despair
> Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
> Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
> Vain war with Heaven.

In each of these passages the style plainly enough belongs to the nature of the subject; yet that seemingly inevitable appropriateness of the style to the idea is the very test of a writer's artistic perception. And any conscious use of style must be governed by the same sense of fitness which tells us when to wear work-day and when to wear holiday clothes. Swift meant this when he said that style is simply "proper words in proper places."

There is a sense, however, in which style becomes more than a simple choice of "proper words in proper places." Stevenson tells us that he "played the sedulous ape" to a succession of writers, trying by study to attach to his work a decorative beauty which should appeal more strongly than plain narrative plainly handled. Take as an example his description of an approach to a Pacific island, from *The Ebb Tide.*

> The airs were very light; their speed was small; the heat intense. The decks were scorching under foot; the sun flamed

overhead, brazen out of a brazen sky; the pitch bubbled in the seams, and the brains in the brain-pan. And all the while the excitement of the three adventurers glowed about their bones like a fever. They whispered and nodded and pointed and put mouth to ear with a singular instinct of secrecy, approaching that island underhand, like eavesdroppers and thieves; and even Davis, from the cross-trees, gave his orders mostly by gestures. The hands shared in this mute strain, like dogs, without comprehending it; and through the roar of so many miles of breakers, it was a silent ship that approached an empty island.

Compare this with a passage of somewhat similar content from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.*

At length I spied a little cove on the right shore of the creek, to which, with great pain and difficulty, I guided my raft, and at last got so near that, reaching ground with my oar, I could thrust her directly in. But here I had like to have dipped all my cargo in the sea again; for, that shore lying pretty sloping, there was no place to land but where one end of my float, if it ran on shore, would lie so high, and the other sink lower, as before, that it would endanger my cargo again. All that I could do was to wait until the tide was at the highest, keeping the raft with my oar, like an anchor, to hold the side of it fast to the shore, near a flat piece of ground, which I expected the water would flow over; and so it did. As soon as I found water enough, for my raft drew about a foot of water, I thrust her up upon that flat piece of ground, and there fastened or moored her by sticking my two broken oars into the ground.

It will readily be seen that the ornamentation of the first passage lends sparkle and color to it which the plain language of the quotation from Defoe does

not possess. Though simplicity of style itself often results from the careful study of simple effects, we usually speak of a passage such as the one quoted from Stevenson as a "studied" or "literary" style, and one of the Defoe type as a "simple" or "natural" style. We must recognize the fact, however, that Defoe's simplicity is essential to the air of unvarnished truth which he gives his story, and that Stevenson's lavishness of phrase and of imagery shows a strong infusion of himself in his narrative, and an intention to make the most of the reader's impressionable senses. The degrees between these extremes of ornateness and plainness are of course innumerable.

Style, then, may be as varied in quality and effect as personal manners in everyday social use. We have seen that a special subject-matter or literary purpose may carry with it a style adapted to it. Yet in the literary forms which are most generally thought to require an appropriate form of phrase, we find that personal habits of mind and preferences dominate a writer's choice of words and phrases. In the essay form we can contrast the pleasant and easy intimacy of Lamb's style with the ponderous, heavily-loaded sentences of Dr. Johnson; and in this contrast, which is generally characteristic of the works of each, there may be, of course, an intimation of corresponding differences in the personalities of the two.

That interaction of a writer's philosophy, or treatment of subject, and style, or manipulation of words

and phrases, which we have referred to in Stevenson and Defoe, tends to create a distinct sense on the reader's part as to the presence of the author's personality in his work. With Defoe we feel that our interest attaches only to the facts of the story, not to the author's way of presenting them. There is no gusto, no spread, no emphasis, no dramatic stress. We call such an author's choice and handling of his subject "impersonal," "detached," "dispassionate," or "objective." In the case of Stevenson we feel the author at our elbow, pushing our interest through clever phrases, stimulating our senses by words of color and sound, striving for beauty and vividness — in a word, conveying his sense of the situation rather than the situation itself. Such a writer we call "subjective," since he makes himself in part the subject of his work.

In the main, these questions of outlook and style really express the balance of temperamental and rational qualities in the author. They are more or less the permanent marks of his literary personality, the characteristics which may always identify him for us. Within these larger circumferences of the author's outlook upon life and literary manner move those lesser and more changeable moods and tones within which he may choose to work for the moment only. Whatever an author's cast of mind, whatever the purpose of his style, he may choose to write tragedy one day and comedy the next. This is of course because the tragic and the comic are only

molds within which the particular subject is cast, or methods of approach, we might say. Beyond that, a writer may treat one character in a story seriously, another with humor, for his intention here depends upon his conception of the particular character. These are only matters of the moment, and may or may not be a recognizable part of the writer's point of view.

Tragic and comic. — The tragic and the comic, we have said, are only ways of representing a subject, and frequently not ways of interpreting life. The essence of both is the sense of incongruity, and the same situation may give rise to either type of treatment. We may see this in *The Merchant of Venice*, which in the court-room scene hovers between a tragic and a comic outcome. Both the tragic and the comic are likely to be attached more or less definitely to an ethical point of view, for the incongruities they deal with are generally those of character. This is instantly clear if we recognize the fact that they generally reflect those weaknesses or distortions of character that are anti-social, and the potentiality of which is likely to depend largely upon their intensity. Avarice, jealousy, gossip, ambition are in certain aspects or within certain degrees objects of mere ridicule; but in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *The School for Scandal* we feel their devastating power. Slight inclinations of chance in these plays determine the outcome. We may see both tragic and comic conceptions, therefore, as the

two ends of a scale of moods which takes in all the ethical attitudes toward problems of character. Both of them dramatize these problems — and therefore tend to exaggerate them or treat them artificially. It is probably for this reason that the Belgian dramatist Maurice Maeterlinck regards the conventional tragic treatment as " something primitive and arid," as too gross in action, and too neglectful of the normal working of heart and mind.

In present-day literature the mood in which human nature and character are brought within the focus of literary treatment tends less to exaggeration, depends less on external accidents, and is more concerned with the consequences which are to be deduced from the facts of character themselves. This is of course a definite part of the realistic program. In Jane Austen's novels we find a gentle but insistent ridicule of fatuity, pride, ambition, complacency, which requires no gratuitous aid of comic or tragic emphasis. Similar handlings of the " social vices " we find in Thackeray's novels, and in our contemporary Arnold Bennett's. We call this form of treatment " social satire." It is in reality a more delicate form of comic treatment, less heavily accented, more in line with normal feelings and with the normal course of events. Almost any reader must feel the superior truth to life of Thackeray's handling of the character of Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*. Here is a portrait of a woman whose selfish ambition is superior to all the gentle virtues; but

Thackeray does not make her a villainess in order to force a melodramatic outcome for her hypocrisies and treacheries; nor does he need to distort circumstances in order to extract a fictitious good from a threatening evil. The tone of this novel is on the whole grave, but with a tolerant smile for a variety of human weaknesses.

Wit and humor. — Wit and humor are other effects which may or may not form an essential feature of a writer's work. Both, of course, are forms of fun-making, their difference lying in the fact that the force of humor is felt to reside in the person or thing or event represented, while the appeal of wit is in the adroitness of the phrase itself. When in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* Moses goes to the fair to sell the Vicar's horse, and returns with a gross of valueless green spectacles which he has been seduced into buying with the proceeds, the effect is humorous. But there is wit in the Vicar's reply to his wife's complaint: "The blockhead has been imposed upon, and should have known his company better." "There, my Dear," says the Vicar, "you are wrong; he should not have known them at all." The wit here is merely in the form of a pun on the word "known"; but puns, though they are, according to the old saying, "the lowest order of wit," are nevertheless the most common form in which we find even literary wit. To illustrate again, in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, there is a well-known scene in which Rosalind, disguised as a boy, instructs her

lover, Orlando, in the winning of his mistress — herself, of course. The amusement that arises from the misunderstanding which she encourages makes a continuous scene of thoroughly fine humor, part of which is due to the delightful ambiguity of the situation, and part to the frolicsomeness of Rosalind's nature. But the scene is developed almost wholly through Rosalind's witty repartee:

"Come now," she tells Orlando; "I will be your Rosalind in a more coming-on disposition, and ask me what you will, I will grant it."

Orlando: Then love me, Rosalind.

Rosalind: Yes, faith, will I; Fridays and Saturdays and all.

Orlando: And wilt thou have me?

Rosalind: Aye, and twenty such.

Orlando: What sayest thou?

Rosalind: Are you not good?

Orlando: I hope so.

Rosalind: Why, then, can one desire too much of a good thing?

The force of wit, then, lies in the telling phrase. Wit is brief; its appeal is to the intelligence — not to sympathy. Indeed, its point is very often ironic, or even cruel. In Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, Sir Peter Teazle censures his butterfly wife's thoughtless following of the fashion. His wife replies:

For my part, I should think you would like to have your wife thought a woman of taste.

Sir Peter: Ay — there again — taste! Zounds! Madam, you had no taste when you married me!

Lady Teazle: That's very true, indeed, Sir Peter; and after having married you, I should never again pretend to taste, I allow.

It is a critical commonplace that humor serves best, or at any rate lasts best, when it is restrained. There is relatively little of downright comicality that has endured in literature. The humor of Shakespeare, of Steele, of Jane Austen, of Thackeray, is generally reserved, and generally combined with wit, which has been defined as "literary humor." The thing which more than anything else gave Dickens his hold upon his contemporaries was his broadly humorous treatment of common characters—beadles, body-servants, hostlers, and the like. But readers today probably are less sensitive to this sort of humor than were Dickens's contemporaries.

Humor appeals to the sympathy. The common source of both pathos and humor is the recognition of some disharmony, but not an ugly one, of idea or character. For this reason humor often verges on pathos, pathos on humor. Most effective passages result from the interplay of the two. Mark Twain denied that there was humor in Goldsmith's episode of Moses and the green glasses, for, he said, the swindle creates in the reader's mind a melancholy sympathy with Moses. For a sensitive-minded reader, this would be true; and it serves to emphasize the fact that a mere twist of sentiment turns a humorous suggestion into a pathetic one, and vice versa. Dickens and Mark Twain are adept at this. One

can scarcely forget how in *Huckleberry Finn* the story is developed through the constant play of these two forces upon our feelings — in the episode of the Shepherdson-Grangerford feud, for instance, and in that of the Wilks orphans. A writer of the most gentle and persuasive humorous art is James M. Barrie, who has an exquisitely tender feeling for this relation of humor to pathos. *Sentimental Tommy* or *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals* offers a hundred instances in which even a strong-minded reader may feel the near relationship between smiles and tears.

Satire and related moods. — Satire is the systematic ridicule of social follies, pretensions, and vices. It may be comic in tone, as in Pope's *Rape of the Lock;* ironic, as in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair;* or more rarely, didactic; but we might risk the judgment that the most effective satiric weapon is irony. The impersonal nature of the comic mood naturally carries with it some unconscious or half-conscious sense of superiority to the object of it. And as this sense becomes stronger as the characteristic is less tolerable, humor merges into irony, in which the point of view is transparently condemnatory, but indirectly, and often with seeming praise of the thing really blamed. We can recognize its tone in this passage from *Vanity Fair.*

> And as the hatred of vice is always a progress towards virtue, Mrs. Bute Crawley endeavored to instil into her sister-in-law a proper abhorrence for all Rawdon Crawley's manifold sins: of

which his uncle's wife brought forward such a catalogue as indeed would have served to condemn a whole regiment of young officers. If a man has committed wrong in life, I don't know any moralist more anxious to point his errors out to the world than his own relations; so Mrs. Bute showed a perfect family interest in and knowledge of Rawdon's history. She had all the particulars of that ugly quarrel with Captain Marker, in which Rawdon, wrong from the beginning, ended in shooting the Captain. She knew how the unhappy Lord Dovedale, whose mamma had taken a house at Oxford, so that he might be educated there, and who had never touched a card in his life till he came to London, was perverted by Rawdon at the Cocoa-Tree, made helplessly tipsy by this abominable seducer and perverter of youth, and fleeced of four thousand pounds. She described with the most vivid minuteness the agonies of the country families whom he had ruined — the sons whom he had plunged into dishonor and poverty — the daughters whom he had inveigled into perdition. She knew the poor tradesmen who were bankrupt through his extravagance — the mean shifts and rogueries with which he had ministered to it — the astounding falsehoods by which he had imposed upon the most generous of aunts, and the ingratitude and ridicule by which he had repaid her sacrifices. She imparted these stories gradually to Miss Crawley; gave her the whole benefit of them; felt it her bounden duty as a Christian woman and mother of a family to do so; had not the smallest remorse or compunction for the victim whom her tongue was immolating; nay, very likely thought her act was quite meritorious, and plumed herself upon her resolute manner of performing it. Yes, if a man's character is to be abused, say what you will, there's nobody like a relation to do the business. And one is bound to own, regarding this unfortunate wretch of a Rawdon Crawley, that the mere truth was enough to condemn him, and that all inventions of scandal were quite superfluous pains on his friends' parts.

Literary forms. — The discussion of literature in any discriminating way must involve acquaintance with the distinguishing principles and purposes of the various forms in which it appears. In the broadest classification these are poetry, drama, prose fiction, and the prose of discourse. These types are seen to overlap in some measure, since a drama may be written in verse, and is really a form of fiction conventionalized for a special purpose. Narrative poetry is also strictly a form of fiction. But it is the critical habit, which has at least convenience to justify it, to regard primarily as drama anything written to be acted, whether prose or verse. The specific purpose of a play, as well as the clearness and continuity of the needs and traditions of the theatre, make it logical to treat all dramatic writing as a unit. Of course it is plain that in the case of a writer like Shakespeare the qualities of his work most discussed are those that reveal him as poet; but the fact that far the greater portion of his work was written for the stage makes the approach to it from this standpoint both simple and reasonable. On the other hand Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, though in form a play, was written without real consideration of the dramatic conventions and practices prevalent in his day; in other words it was written not really to be acted. Consequently we do not think of Milton as a dramatist, but as a poet.

Poetry has from the dawn of literary consciousness been felt to be the profoundest and the most

dignified literary utterance. That is, it has been regarded as possessing an emotional and intellectual depth that could not be equalled in prose — the plain speech of every day. The preciousness and singularity of the poet's gift was accounted for by the attribution to him of a power that actually linked him with divinity. Poetry therefore has always constituted a literary type which stands by itself, superior to any more special aim of art which it may enfold. Of such aims in poetry three stand out eminently — narrative or story-telling poetry, lyric poetry or poetry which conveys briefly simple emotional impressions, and dramatic poetry. But dramatic poetry, as we have just pointed out, is always judged by two determinants — its quality as poetry, and its fitness for the stage.

Prose has never until relatively recently taken a major place in the discussion of things literary. Sir Francis Bacon, Shakespeare's contemporary, conceived poetry as the natural vehicle of imaginative literature, and ranked prose in the same class as history; that is, as a more or less non-literary form. It was partly the cause and partly the effect of this prejudice that even good prose, prose at once clear and inviting, had never until that time held its place beside poetry. For two centuries now it has been coming into its own, until at present it seems to hold, at least for the time being, the preëminent place as the effective literary utterance. Our plays and works of fiction are all but exclusively prose; and these are

certainly for our generation the literary forms of most characteristic appeal. A multiplicity of influences has contributed to this condition — chief among them, of course, the diffusion of education, but an education directed as far as " the masses " are concerned to practical ends, rather than to the cultivation of a traditional view of literary arts and culture. Literature has also become democratized. Plain people not only read books, but are the subjects of the books they read; and such books do not need the specious elevation of a poetical medium. Last of all, there can be no doubt that the rational tendencies in the world of thought during the last two centuries have tended to increase our regard for a mode of communication which, whatever it may lack in emotional sweep and suggestiveness, is, at any rate, instantly and precisely clear. For a world very much concerned with facts, the language of facts seems the available language — even for the purposes of literary art.

In prose we have two main divisions: imaginative prose, and the prose of discourse (which we may take the liberty of calling discursive prose). The chief part of imaginative prose is the field of writing that stands first in the literary experience of most readers — fiction. Its importance as the most popular and most discussed form of writing today places it in a class completely by itself. Discursive prose embraces everything from the polite essay (often taking a narrative form, as with Addison or Lamb) to those writings of expository or argumentative

purpose which are accepted as literature only because of the skill or grace of their handling. Such effects are to be found in the scientific works of Huxley, the historical writings of Gibbon and Carlyle, and the oratory of Burke.

Our purpose in the succeeding chapters of this volume is to deal with these forms into which literature is felt conventionally to fall. Any sound knowledge of literature must be based upon some clear and embracing view of the things that literature can achieve and the way in which they are achieved. And it is necessary to this end that we give some attention to artistic ways and means. At the same time we must recognize the fact, already noted, that while critical science makes much use of labels, the label is only an aid to discussion. Classification never shows the significance of things; it neglects individuality for the purposes of generalization. The identification of a flower by the marks of genus and species in a botanical hand-book would scarcely tempt one to go out in the meadows to look for it. But it would enable him to talk intelligently with one who understands plants about the place of that flower in the botanical economy. So in literature. Most of the opinions we hear expressed about books show a general inability to bring two distinct literary facts together and compare them intelligently. And of course they cannot be compared intelligently unless we have conceptions and terms in which to compare them. Hence the discussions that follow.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For one interested in the discussion of the claims of literary interest, George Edward Woodberry's *The Appreciation of Literature* (Harcourt, 1922) will be found a stimulating consideration of the qualities of literary appeal in the various types — but not of the details of literary form. Frederic Harrison's *The Choice of Books* (Macmillan, 1886) is also a suggestive discussion of the purposes of reading. Frank L. Mott's *Rewards of Reading* (Holt, 1926) is a set of informing essays upon the literary types, with extensive and discriminating lists of illustrative reading.

For lengthier discussion of the differences in the realistic, romantic, and classical points of view, see William Allan Neilson's *The Essentials of Literature* (Houghton Mifflin, 1911).

PROSE FICTION

Fiction is story-telling — the most primitive and widely appreciated form of literary appeal. Stories are told in both prose and verse, but poetic narratives are as a rule regarded in the first place as poetry, and are generally, therefore, felt and classified as poetry. In addition, the conventions of poetry are not wholly favorable to the complex effects and greater spread of modern story-writing; so the person who today has a story to tell is likely to hold to good manageable prose, and to avoid the artificiality of tone and the limitations upon phrase which the poetical form imposes. Fiction, then, as the term is generally used today, is taken to refer to prose narratives.

The growth of fiction. — Primitive types of narrative embrace fables and legends the object of which is less to represent life as it is than to appeal vividly to the fancy; so the history of fiction is (like the history of any art) one of increasing complexity in effects, and also one that envisages more and more clearly the purpose of achieving truth to life. It may seem a little odd that this is so; for on the face of things a plain sequence of typical occurrences, such as we might find in a novel of today, would seem the form into which even the most primitive story-telling would naturally fall. Yet it is a larger

knowledge of life and a more perfect art that create the ability to see and present life as it is, and not simply as seen through the eye of the imagination. It is also evident at a glance that the increased activities and resources of modern life provide material of more varied, and possibly higher, interest in life itself. In a primitive community the dearth of interests outside of a simple daily routine almost forces the story-teller into the domain of the exaggerative and supernatural.

Components of fiction. — Yet what goes to make up a story is fundamentally the same in all ages and countries, in the plainest fable of Æsop and the most finished novel. The question of truth to life is one, further, that does not affect fiction exclusively; for we encounter it in the drama and in narrative poetry. Story-making has its analogy to cookery in the sense that we can distinguish the ingredients of the dish from its seasoning. The ingredients of a story — its indispensables — are only two: characters and action; that is, people and the things that they do. Many other considerations may go to the producing of story effect; but these two must be present and evident in every kind of narrative.

Characterization. — The depiction of character has always tended to the drawing of either types or individuals. Yet it is useful in this connection to remember that a type character is merely one in which certain broad principles of personality or con-

duct are sharply marked, and an individual character is one in which the formula of character is more complex because more individual. Neither conception is truer than the other, for in the type character we have truth to a class or to an aspect of nature or temperament; in the individualized character we have truth to the variability of human nature. A writer who deals principally in types, however, as does Cooper or Dickens, presents us human nature only in its broadest aspects, and without refinement of observation. The drift of later narrative art has been definitely away from this less discriminating characterization. Where it presents types, as it may be thought to in the case of Somerset Maugham or Theodore Dreiser, it selects in the first place what might be called "normal types," and treats abnormalities as the key to the individual variation from the normal, assuming that there is no such person as an absolutely normal individual.

In the novel, or in any work of fiction which shows a situation of some breadth developing over more or less time, we look for some sort of change in character. That is, we expect that the experience confronting a character will, however it works out, produce some effect upon him for better or worse. This expectation is simply a part of our feeling that every important experience in life leaves something of a mark upon the individual affected. Yet much here may depend upon what we mean by development of character. The old view of character for the purposes of fiction

conceived it as something to be made or marred by the practice of vice or virtue. This we see in most of the novels written before 1800, as well as in writers like Dickens and Hawthorne. The only "development" of character in *Oliver Twist* is Oliver's resolute growth in right-mindedness and high principle. In Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* the growth of character is in similar straight channels opened up by the very definitions of character at the beginning of the story. That earlier view of character has discoverable relations to the sympathetic and optimistic teachings of Christian ethics. In almost all our earlier fiction there is an explicit approval of characters that exhibit the marks of personality and conduct which were regarded as good for society, and a corresponding aversion, also unconcealed, for what were felt to be anti-social or malign qualities of character.

A more modern view of character-development is that circumstances merely bring into the light individual susceptibilities and capacities that have always been integral in character, though possibly latent. To a writer holding this view of character-growth, character is always interesting because of the problems it enfolds. Thackeray makes the point clear in a passage in *Vanity Fair* in which he represents his heroine, Becky Sharp, voicing the conviction that she could "be a good woman if she had five thousand a year"; but Becky's speculations are followed by Thackeray's summary judgment that the roots of her character lay deeper than she imag-

ined. In novels of the "naturalistic" trend, from William Dean Howells' *A Modern Instance* down to the latest of Arnold Bennett or Sinclair Lewis, this is the prevailing point of view. Its cause is to be found in the newer psychologic conceptions of the formative effect of heredity and environment. With the view of character which comes from a fair and impartial consideration of all the forces that enter into its making, that other sense of character as something definitely good or bad, to be admired or condemned because it is either good or bad, breaks down. In the modern attitude toward the question, whatever the outstanding characteristics may be, they are at any rate considered without passion, and possess interest less because they stand as embodiments of our social ideals and aversions, than because they shed light upon the complexities of human nature. Examples of this literalness of characterization, with a relative or complete absence of sympathetic emphasis, may be seen in the late-Victorians, Meredith and Hardy, or in a smaller compass in Kipling's *William the Conqueror*, or *Bread upon the Waters*. These stories are not without the most definite claims upon sympathy, but they give it no sentimental emphasis. The aim here is analysis, not moral generalization.

The process of character analysis described above may be expanded into a careful and exhaustive accumulation of all that sheds light upon the hidden springs of personality. This process is exemplified

in the careful and resourceful " psychologic " examination of character that is present in the work of Henry James, who considers always one problem — that of the interrelations of personal character and a " high society " environment. It is also present in the stories of Joseph Conrad. His *Lord Jim* is a subjective study of a man's mind continuing true to his evaluation of himself even after he had seemed to the world to have written himself a coward. In Conrad's *Typhoon* and *The Shadow Line* we have companion stories superficially of sea-atmosphere under striking moods of nature; but they are really extended studies of character under the constant pressure of trying conditions. With the immense diffusion of interest today in the psycho-analytic method, it is inevitable that literary research should carry analysis back to the obscurest sources of character in the earliest formative years. We see the method in use in Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* and in May Sinclair's *Mary Ollivier*, to cite two of the best known novels of their class. Both of these fictions trace human growth from earliest childhood, bringing into the light hidden grains of evidence for the explanation of dimly emerging traits. This interest in character, however, is only a further projection of the method that George Meredith and George Eliot had already employed.

Action. — It is always this interplay of character and circumstances that produces action. The action of a story (as of a play) is simply its movement. The

principal characters may "act" very little in the sense that action implies initiative and effort. We see in the *Book of Job*, for example, that Job is an almost wholly passive character. In Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*, too, we have a story in which the principals merely respond to the drift of events. But whether a character controls or is controlled by events, the interest that we feel in him is centered in the place he occupies in the action. Since he is involved in a problem, we are interested in what he can do with it, or what it will do with him. His relation to the problem involves his will and the forces aligned against his will, which may be forces of mere accident, or elements of environment, or some kind of conscious, direct, and clearly embodied opposition. But whether the conditions he confronts are trivial or tragic, whether they contain a simple challenge to courage and ingenuity, as they do in *Treasure Island* or *Rob Roy*, or carry the marks of controlling destiny, as they do in the *House of Seven Gables* or *Romola* or *The Return of the Native*, the stir of interest in us comes from the attitude and the responsive action of the principals. Characters without the connected interest of action may possess an attraction in themselves (as they do in the Sir Roger de Coverley papers) but story-interest grows from their involvement in a situation which keeps them in motion.

Episode and plot stories. — Action itself appears as a sequence of events; a sequence because few

stories are so simple as to contain no more than a single episode. The nature of this sequence defines for us two types of story. The first is the episodic story, a chain of episodes which have no relation except that they affect the same characters. The second is the story with a plot. Plot is a logical sequence, that is, one in which a given event not only precedes but is the cause of a following event. Plot in a story usually means complication, — the introduction of a problem of action to be solved. We might illustrate the distinction concretely by supposing that our Aunt Genevieve plans to spend her morning shopping. She sets out betimes, visits one shop after another, makes all her purchases, encounters no mishaps, and returns home in time for lunch. An account of her trip would be a piece of episodic narrative. But if she found herself on the car without her purse, she would be started on a complication, and by so much she would be the principal in a developing plot, the successive steps in which would be determined by what she did and what other people did. An episodic narrative may be compared to a string of beads. If we cut one bead out, we don't destroy the string; we merely shorten it. But a plot narrative has an interrelation of parts that function successively through one another, and so cannot be attached and detached at will.

We rarely find an even balance between character-interest and plot-interest; for a writer is more than

likely to favor one at the expense of the other. This, however, is not merely a tendency, but in some degree a matter of logic. Where plot is elaborate or intricate, as in a story of adventure or a detective story, detailed attention to character might easily lower the interest in the movement of the story; but where character is studied carefully, an involved plot would seem artificial. The claim exerted by either of these interests, character and plot, to the exclusion of the other is recognized in the critical distinction between "stories of character" and "stories of action," the first of essentially realistic tendency, and the second generally more or less romantic in idea and treatment. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Thackeray's *Pendennis*, Henry James's *The American*, Samuel Butler's *Way of All Flesh*, are novels of character. Scott's *Waverley Novels*, Cooper's *Leather Stocking Tales*, Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, are novels of action.

Since plot presents not only a succession of events, but a sequence proceeding from a cause to a result, particular stress may be placed upon any element in this sequence. In Meredith's *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* the train of events in the story is directed to the slow and careful building up of a set of relations between father and son that are bound to collapse when submitted to a test of any severity. The collapse itself is sudden and brief; so that structurally we have in this story great expansion of the element of cause, and relatively contracted treat-

ment of the logical result. In *The Scarlet Letter*, on the other hand, the entire story is taken up with the concluding episodes of a transgression enacted years before, but working out its grim sequel at length. In Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, which we might take as the pattern of the "regular" novel, interest is distributed very evenly over all aspects of the development of action.

The merits of intricate plots as against simple plots may be overestimated. An intricate plot simply introduces a greater number of obstructions to the normal passage of events; and is therefore in the main a greater test of ingenuity. Such plots naturally increase the interest in action, but they are normally associated with stories of action rather than of character-analysis. We are not surprised, therefore, to find Hawthorne, Howells, Henry James, and Arnold Bennett dealing with relatively simple plots embracing few characters. Scott's plots, on the other hand, as well as Dickens's, have much greater spread, and generally involve more actors. There is a further form of complication in which the action moves back and forth between two groups of characters, or even more. Dickens is particularly given to this form of development, which is with him the result of publication in serial or "part" form. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Our Mutual Friend* the reader is constantly tossed back and forth from one group to another. The relations of these groups are constantly held together by the

main strength of the writer, and the conclusion of the story depends largely upon a series of chance encounters to bring about a solution which embraces the fortunes of all the principals.

In this whole question of story-structure we may attach ourselves too readily to precepts. A " logical " plot must be one that best serves the author's purposes. *Robinson Crusoe* is no less interesting for being strictly episodic. We forgive Scott for stopping midway in *Redgauntlet* to have the chance-met Wandering Willie tell his story. Indeed digression becomes a distinct matter of art in a writer like Thackeray, who steps aside from his narrative for personal chats with the reader, side-lights upon secondary characters, and a hundred other occasions. In stories like *The Demi-Gods* and *The Crock of Gold*, by our delightful contemporary James Stephens, the meager plot-structure serves merely as a support for a gathering of tales from and about every character introduced to us. Such departures from a rigidly unified and coherent narrative method may be either more or less agreeable to a reader than the careful economy of a Hawthorne or a Jane Austen; but neither process can be called right to the exclusion of the other.

Beyond these essentials of character and action, there are aids to interest which are entering with increasing importance into modern fiction. Those most readily recognized are setting or background, and local color or atmosphere. However, they are

not always essential to interest. We all know stories without setting in either time or place, and stories, too, in which there is little or no appeal to the eye. Poe's *The Black Cat* is a case in point.

Setting. — Setting embraces the general background of the story as to place, period, social stamp, customs, anything that prescribes the modes of thought and conduct that surround and influence the characters. The Scotland that provides the background for Stevenson's *Kidnapped* is not at all the Scotland of Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy*. The importance of a specific setting varies greatly, too. In Hardy's novels setting has so determinative a value that the story seems almost to grow out of the very soil of the country he depicts. In George Meredith's drawing-room society, in Arnold Bennett's "Five Towns," in Tolstoi's peasant homes, we have settings that influence in the strongest way the whole course of action and the central tendency of thought. On the other hand the relation between setting and action, or setting and character, may be quite incidental and unintegrated, in some cases providing little more than a harmonious social background, as it does in some of the minor Victorian novelists such as Charles Kingsley and Charles Reade.

Local color and atmosphere. — Local color and atmosphere are the aspects of time and place that are introduced less to determine the actions of the characters than to appeal to the feelings and the senses

of the reader. The distinction between local color and atmosphere is not always consistently made, but it is nevertheless fairly clear. Local color, as the term itself implies, is appeal primarily to the eye. Atmosphere refers particularly to the social environment, or to surroundings which are felt rather than seen. Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales*, his *Mosses from an Old Manse*, his *Scarlet Letter*, are filled with the local color of colonial New England — its streets, sea-fronts, houses, halls, woodlands, and the appearance and movements of its gentle-folk and workers. They exhibit also the piety, the repression, and the intolerance and superstition of the Puritan life, which are all matters of atmosphere. The determinative function of setting, as against the expansive or decorative function of local color or atmosphere, we may fix clearly by referring again to Stevenson's *Kidnapped*. The setting is that of Scotland in the middle-eighteenth century, in the throes of the Jacobite Rebellion, occupied by a hostile army, and following its own political tenets and religion with the hard resolution not to yield to the usurping Englishman. These facts are premises to the action of the story. The local color is that of heathery hillsides, the rugged coast and the coastal islands, and the comings and goings of untamed, canny, picturesque clansmen. The atmosphere, strictly speaking, is the manners and social habits of these highlandmen.

While local color is in fiction in the main an orna-

ment, and not an essential interest, it not infrequently carries so much of vividness and zest that it supplies a kind of substance for stories of actually thin narrative interest, as we find in Barrie's volume of tales called *A Window in Thrums*, or in his *Old Licht Idyls*. It may also atone in large part for all but the gravest artistic deficiencies; it goes far, for instance, toward making good stories of Bret Harte's carelessly contrived tales of western prospectors and stage-drivers. What it may be at its best is seen in Kipling's tales of British civil and military life in India. It counts heavily, of course, in the American magazine short story. Yet no amount of cleverness in the handling of local color will turn an unsatisfactory story into a good one. Probably as important a reason as any that we have not produced a "great American novel" out of the wealth of significant material about us is just the fact that we have paid altogether too much attention to the picturesqueness of the physical background and the diverse phases of social life, and too little to matters of general interest and meaning.

Story management. — We come now to one of the most important features of the story-teller's art — the process by which he assembles for us the materials of his story. A story of the scope and complexity found in modern fiction is far from an exclusively narrative process. Almost any story, in the first place, has necessary description that has little to do with the movement of the story. If we

are interested, as we are likely to be, in the physical appearance of the figures introduced, we must be made acquainted with them through description. So with the interest of scenery, of any particular social group, of all, in short, that attaches to setting and color. Such description may be conveyed with varying directness and in varying proportion. It may come to us in substantial mass, without artifice or concealment of any sort, or it may be more discreetly injected into the story by effective suggestions as the story develops. The use of the first method is held particularly severely against both Scott and Cooper, who in addition resort to scenic description where it not only is unessential to the narrative, but actually checks or interrupts it. The taste for display of such descriptive effects has now all but completely passed; but even within the bounds of permissible description, our present tendency is to greater economy than was practiced by the writers of as little as two generations ago. There is something to be lamented in this tendency when we think of the unusual vividness of appeal that Stevenson could secure in passages that struck sharply upon the visual sense. We have quoted such a passage in another connection (pages 13–14). The secret of Stevenson's success in this lay in his power to disguise his formal effect by an extraordinary vigor and beauty of word. In Kipling, on the other hand, one of the closest students of economy of phrase and effect, we have the same vigor of phrase employed

not in continuous passages of description, but in detached snatches that simply give point to the action. Where he stops to describe, and that is rarely, it is with a far-reaching allusiveness that takes in a scene in a sentence. The passage below from *The Last Relief* is a highly accomplished piece of description in his characteristic manner, well knit with the action of the story, and appealing to the different perceptive senses — particularly smell and hearing — with subtle and telling suggestion. But its purpose is clearly secondary and atmospheric.

In the pauses he could catch the crunching of 'rickshaw wheels and the clatter of horses' feet going to the dance at the Viceroy's. These ceased at last, and the rain with them. The thunder drew off, muttering, toward the plains, and all the dripping pine-trees sighed with relief.

"Orderly," said Hamerton. He fancied that he heard somebody moving about the rooms. There was no answer, except a deep-drawn breath at the door. It might come from a panther prowling about the verandas in search of a pet dog, but panthers generally snuffed in a deeper key. This was a thick, gasping breath, as of one who had been running swiftly, or lay in deadly pain. Hamerton listened again. There certainly was somebody moving about the Foreign Office. He could hear boards creaking in far-off rooms, and uncertain steps on the ricketty staircase. Since the clock marked close upon midnight, no one had a right to be in the office. Hamerton had picked up the lamp, and was going to make a search, when the steps and the heavy breathing came to the door again and staid.

Exposition. — Fiction depends further upon exposition for some of its most necessary effects. Exposi-

tion is simply explanation; and whatever useful purpose it may serve in the narrative, it is more or less an interruption to movement. In the main its importance may be said to increase in proportion to the interests of character and motive. As long as these interests are simple and visible, they are sufficiently clear without extensive explanation, being adequately conveyed as a rule in dialogue and incidental description. But in Jane Austen, Thackeray, and George Eliot the treatment is more closely analytical, with the result that these writers expand to very substantial proportions the space devoted to well considered discussion of questions of character. Where the exposition of character and the relation of character to action become very subtle, exposition may become the predominant matter of the story, as it is in Henry James. James works on the assumption not only that conversation and the narrative links are insufficient to convey more than fragmentary glimpses of character, but that conversation in highly bred society is intended to conceal politely actual character and motives. This compels the inquiring mind to search for what is hidden beneath the superficial evidence of conversation. Out of this assumption develops a form of narrative treatment in which relatively brief passages of dialogue are interspersed with lengthy passages of exposition built up about this dialogue, a marked departure from the normal balance of these two mediums. James's performance is of course exceptional, but it

is nevertheless true that in the novels of the last century the weight of exposition has in general increased with the growth of interest in problems of character.

Probably the most distinct achievement in modern fiction, and one in which there can be no doubt as to the artistic value of the change, is the relegation of these necessary but intrusive elements of description and exposition to what we might call the chinks in the strictly narrative portions of the story, particularly in the dialogue. The advantage of this treatment lies first in the fact that the reader does not feel these two processes as retarding influences, secondly in the fact that the practice serves the purpose of economy, and lastly in the fact that it improves the narrative process itself, and particularly the dialogue, by introducing variety of effect. Jane Austen had used the narrative art of her time to perfection in the skilful depiction of society and manners, yet that art was not developed to the point where notation of gesture, attitude, intonation, as the revealing suggestions of manner and mind, relieved barren stretches of rather formal conversation. And of the further art of letting the movement of her narrative carry its incidental exposition, she knew relatively little. All her comment upon the workings of her principals' minds comes to us in masses of direct discussion which cut right across the action. We can see this lack of what we might call " juice " in her dialogue (even though it is itself

a highly interesting and enlightening medium) in this passage from *Emma:*

"You are not quite so miserable, though, as when you first came. Go and eat and drink a little more, and you will do very well. Another slice of cold meat, another draught of Madeira and water, will make you nearly on a par with us."

"No — I shall not stir. I shall sit by you. You are my best cure."

"We are going to Box Hill tomorrow; you will join us. It is not Switzerland, but it will be something for a young man so much in want of a change. You will stay and go with us?"

"No, certainly not; I shall go home in the cool of the evening."

"But you may come again in the cool of tomorrow morning."

"No — it will not be worth while. If I come, I shall be cross."

"Then pray stay at Richmond."

"But if I do, I shall be crosser still. I can never bear to think of you there without me."

"These are difficulties which you must settle for yourself. Choose your own degree of crossness. I shall press you no more."

The rest of the party were now returning, and all were soon collected.

But even as early as Meredith's *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) we find dialogue interspersed with the motion, color, and mood of the occasion. In the fragment below our sense of the situation is derived as much from the illuminating suggestions of tone, gesture, and mental attitude, as from what is actually said.

"Then that was his appointment!" Mrs. Doria murmured.

"That was the cake for breakfast!" breathed a second of her sex.

"And it was his ring!" exclaimed a third.

The men were silent, and made long faces.

Clare stood cold and sedate. She and her mother avoided each other's eyes.

"Is it that abominable country person, Adrian?"

"The happy damsel is, I regret to say, the Papist dairy-maid," said Adrian, in sorrowful but deliberate accents.

Then arose a feminine hum, in the midst of which Mrs. Doria cried, "Brandon!" She was a woman of energy. Her thoughts resolved to action spontaneously.

"Brandon," she drew the barrister a little aside, "can they not be followed, and separated? I want your advice. Cannot we separate them? A boy! It is really shameful if he should be allowed to fall into the toils of a designing creature to ruin himself irrevocably. Can we not, Brandon?"

Point of view. — Well managed stories, long or short, have a definite and discernible point of view. By this is meant a disclosure of the events of the story as they might be known either to an actor in the story or to an observer outside of it. The narrative may be presented (as is most commonly the case) with the tacit assumption that the writer is aware not only of all the events that come to pass, but of everything in the minds and hearts of the characters he creates. This is called the omniscient, or ubiquitous, point of view. All motives and explanations are at the command of the writer who takes this position, and he can move quite freely from point to point and from place to place in his

story without offering a reason. On the other hand the " consistent " point of view generally places the restriction upon the writer that what is revealed in the narrative shall be no more than may logically and properly be known to a person more or less immediately concerned in it. Such a person may be a principal in the story, as we find the case in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* or Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, in both of which the narrator is the character most involved in the action. Or the narrator may be introduced into the story as a character whose function it is to observe and note occurrences. This is what Conrad resorts to in his *Typhoon*, and it is a very favorite method with Kipling, a large number of whose early stories come from the lips of his " soldiers three." The effect is a strong appearance of truth. The same thing holds with regard to stories written in letters, like Fanny Burney's old fashioned novel *Evelina*, and of stories in which diaries, old manuscripts, or the like, purport to be the author's sources of information. The ubiquitous or omniscient point of view we see in far the greater part of our writing. It is a convenient outlook for a story-teller, and is adequate for story purposes except where it may involve too much spread of narrative. In Dickens's longer novels this is markedly the case, with sometimes sad effects upon the reader's memory and patience.

Narrative style. — The question of style in relation to the management of a story is one upon which

we need spend little time; yet a word may not be out of place. Let us recall once more the old observation that "style is the man," but also that in matters of style an author is free, within the limits of his artistic power, to make himself what he chooses. Style as an important decorative effect in fiction, is a matter of rather recent development. Scott is not encumbered with a style — possibly one of his real defects is that he is almost always without an adorning literary manner. Dickens has scarcely more of it; but in Thackeray we find a cunning in the mere way of saying things that instantly places him among the stylists — yet his style is little more than a sparkling and sometimes headlong carelessness, without continued beauty. In Meredith style becomes at once commanding and poetical — we may see it in *Richard Feverel* — when the movement sanctions it; and the perfect appropriateness of his lyric tone for his love-scenes and his ironic tone for his graver judgments is our first important glimpse, in English fiction, of a style which is sufficiently varied to serve all the ends of art. In Stevenson, style is used again with fine finish, but principally for pictorial effects, since Stevenson is a writer first of all of stories of action. Style in our later fiction has become something of quite special appeal, neglecting somewhat, or even completely, that old precept that the perfect style does not call out for recognition of itself. In Henry James, for instance, and in his literary disciple, Joseph Conrad, the peculiarities in the order and

structure of the sentence, the "precious" phrases, the curious use of adverbs and adjectives, and a hundred tricks of manner, create a style so ingeniously fashioned and so highly individualized that there is good reason to question whether it is an added and special charm or an unnecessary and boresome mannerism. A single sentence from James will make the point at once clear.

> There were only two things that would have made Nick lukewarm about disposing in a few frank words of all this; one of them his general hatred of talking of his private affairs (a reluctance in which he and Peter were well matched); and the other a particular sentiment which would have involved more of a confession, and which could not be otherwise described than as a perception that the most definite and even the most pleasant consequence of the collapse of his engagement was, as it happened, an extreme consciousness of freedom.

We can only add that "there is no disputing tastes." There are certainly many readers to whom this style is highly and seriously meritorious. And since we have mentioned James already as the most thorough and finished of the psychologists in modern fiction, we can put two and two together to reach the conclusion that there is at least consistency in an intricate and highly particular style serving as the dress for an intricate and highly particular narrative method. We have said so much for James not because the average reader of unformed experience will find him readily delightful, but because he happens to be the "last word" in the present taste for

elaborately studied effects. There is little probability that either he or his followers will ever be broadly popular writers; for it may be said in a word that the aims of style in fiction are best realized where style adds to the emotional sharpness of the reader's impressions, as it does in Meredith's earlier and simpler stories and in Stevenson's narratives. Where it is directed, as in James, at intellectual effects, it probably spells its own defeat.

Story forms. — We have discussed so far the general aims and methods of fiction as they affect narrative in general, long or short, romantic or realistic, stressing character or stressing action. It remains to define briefly the various forms of fiction which have in our own times received something like distinct and typical treatment.

It is plain that the readiest and most obvious differences in narrative form are connected with the question of length. It is not so evident that the question of length may involve further and important considerations as to the relation between theme and breadth of treatment. The difference between a very long story and a very short story is not that the long story multiplies the material of the short story, but that the long story usually covers a different range of effects, and follows a different method. What we are in the habit of calling a novel may be little more than the expansion of a single theme in both time and space, the mere multiplication of the number of episodes and characters, with the increased

complexity that this multiplication naturally brings about. In *Oliver Twist* we have a typical story of the nameless pauper who through his own good qualities finds his proper place in life, and through his good fortune finds his family. The chain of episodes which carry us over his youthful years might be broken at almost any point, and an end brought to the story; yet if this were done, we should find that we missed a number of effects that attach to the story because it is protracted. In the first place, the mere extension of the story in point of time gives us a view of growth of character, not of the single period or point in that growth which a short story would ordinarily present. Then this novel as we have it has spaciousness, too, — the larger outlook upon British society of the Thirties which could not be conveyed without narrative breadth. The matter of intricacy of plot we may neglect, since intricate plots do not of themselves make narratives either good or bad, and most elaborately complicated plots are made so by the main strength of the writer. Above all, we have in *Oliver Twist* a fairly even emphasis upon the varied qualities of experience that life shows us in the living of it; and this impression cannot be gained from any single outstanding episode. In a word, what the long type of story should, and usually does, give us, is the interest of continuity and that of breadth, and therefore a completer and more concrete sense of life and of the relations of the individual to the society in which he moves.

A still further point of special advantage in the longer forms of fiction may be illustrated more aptly by some other writer than Dickens. If we take Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as an instance, we find a plot of the greatest simplicity — one that might be retained without significant alteration in one-tenth the space devoted to the novel. Miss Austen's novel gives us the plain story of a gentleman of important station forced against his family interest and his aristocratic inclination to yield to the charm and intelligence of a young girl with neither position nor dowry; and the corresponding obligation, on her part, to acknowledge the manliness and fineness of character of the man whom she has at first considered a mere snob. But if we were to extract the plot from the novel, we should find that we had failed to take with it the real attraction of the novel; for its compelling interest lies in its faultless depiction of the manners and social habits of the life in which these two figures moved. In this case, then, there is no extensive multiplication of the simple story elements, but an addition of a single element of interest which could not be conveyed except through the painstaking reproduction of the complexion and color of social usage.

Let us risk one last example of the essential differences between the longer and the shorter fiction in modern practice. That glorious set of man-and-beast fables comprised in the Mowgli stories in Kipling's *Jungle Book* had their root in a single story

written some years before, and now printed as the last of the series — *In the Rukh*. This story is as it stands simply the final episode of what might be made, with a few connecting links, a continuous episodic story of the woodland life of the man-cub Mowgli. But its singularity is that even though patently adapted, in the breadth of its retrospect over a life of primitive breeding and habits, to serve as a "container" for a set of tales touching that earlier boy-life, it has really no structural connection with those tales. It is interesting to find that so promising a story in itself did not become the nucleus of a continuous narrative, but only the last bead on a string of separate story units.

The novel. — What we have pointed out as the organic, and not accidental, differences between the longer narratives of today and the shorter ones may serve us as something of a definition of the modern novel. It is a prose work of fiction of some length and of some complication, presenting a definite social background, and whatever its point of view, whether didactic, sentimental, satiric, or detached, containing also a significant judgment of social tendencies. Its continuity, its well-rounded form, and its even emphasis, are rather the natural accompaniments of its length and breadth than the outcome of fixed views of what it ought artistically to achieve. The focus of interest upon relatively few characters — or even a single one — is also not a universal test of effectiveness, for there are many departures from

this practice, but rather an embodiment of the principle of unity, which generally appears also in a well centralized plot. This statement of the mere "points" of a presentable novel, however, scarcely provides a usable definition of the novel, but that is because during its two centuries of development the novel (in particular the English novel) has undergone great changes in scope and purpose and embraces today a multitude of special effects. What constitutes a really good novel can probably be seen best in a comparison of the substance of some familiar novels that serve as clear and distinctive examples of their type. We may choose for this purpose Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–8), Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1882), and Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger* (1910).

Robinson Crusoe. — It is not quite correct to call *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) a novel; for in the first place if we accept as one test of the novel its criticism of social environment, we must remember that in the greater part of the story of Crusoe's life on his lonely island, there is no social environment whatever. And we can scarcely beg the question by saying that a character's adjustment to the absence of all society is of the same order as his adjustment to some particular set of social surroundings. There are two respects, however, in which Defoe's story marked a new achievement in fiction, and both of these are important in the traditions in which the novel later developed. What passed as the equivalent of the

modern novel before Defoe's time was a long and tedious prose tale in which polite society was employed to illustrate polite social attitudes. Defoe, however, succeeded in putting into his pages men and women whose virtues and defects were sufficiently balanced to make them look thoroughly human, and who moved through a simple succession of normal human experiences. His purpose is to represent life sincerely and fairly as to its main and characteristic occurrences. *Robinson Crusoe* of course depicts only a single outstanding character, whose experiences are highly exceptional. Yet that single figure shows us humanity in very human terms; and if shipwreck on an isolated island is not in itself normal, at any rate the events of Crusoe's life there do not jar in the least upon our sense of what would be probable under the circumstances. We see this in every moment of Crusoe's struggle with conditions. In a word, Crusoe's destiny is handled in strict accord with the logic of the situation. In spite of the fact that Crusoe lives outside of society, the challenge of existence demands of him just the same fortitude and persistency of effort that a normally situated man must show in a world of human beings; and in the process of adjustment to his environment Crusoe comes face to face with his own character as the center of his problem — another discovery in fiction.

Above all *Robinson Crusoe* is remarkable for a handling of the " facts " of the story with one single

end in view — the creation in the reader's mind of the impression of truth. Defoe's experience before the writing of this great story had been of the sort that today we call "journalistic"; so he had been trained to dress events to create first of all this sense of truth. He does not make Crusoe's life on the island a series of triumphs of human inventiveness in a happy and well-furnished country. Nor does he put any false emphasis upon the dramatic elements in the situation. Instead he enumerates his experiences from day to day, showing us how Crusoe met them with resolution and resourcefulness, often succeeding only after resultless trials, and with relatively few "breaks" of luck to favor him. We may remember the steps by which Crusoe contrived to hollow a boat for himself from the trunk of a great tree, only to find that when finished it was too heavy to move to the water's edge; and how from that point he struggled at the digging of a ditch in which it could be floated to the sea, but was forced to give that up too. From the point of view of result, all this work of Crusoe's is lost effort. Why, then, should Defoe be so careful to give us all these steps in the story? Simply because he is writing the story of Crusoe's life, not the drama of his successes. In this meticulous attention to the accumulation of detail — not the selection of dramatic detail — Defoe takes the first steps in that "realism of facts" that is so important a thing in the technique of the novel of today.

In these two respects, then, in the viewing of plot as logically implicit in the situation and the characters involved, and in the building up of the effect of truth through the accumulation of unstressed facts, Defoe is quite as well entitled as anyone to be called the father of the English novel, since his practice anticipated so much of its point of view and its method.

There is something else to be noted with regard to *Robinson Crusoe* — that it is the story of a plain man. That is in itself a matter of importance, for the novel has come to be the form of literature which most effectually expresses democratic interests. This is not an essential, but it is something that looks definitely toward later developments.

Vanity Fair. — Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–8) represents a century and a quarter of developments in fiction after the publication of *Robinson Crusoe;* and it is in a way a summary of those developments. *Vanity Fair* gives us the story of one of the most fascinating women of fiction, Becky Sharp. The treatment of her character is interesting because its dominating features are revealed to us at first only through those little flashes of evidence that require care in interpretation. During as much as the first quarter of the story we are puzzled to know whether she has only an innocent propensity for flirtation and not much more than a sensible woman's care for her worldly future, or whether she is a "designing woman." The stages of her transit from obscurity

to a world of social glory, and thence to the career of a reckless social hanger-on, are indicated through very gradual revelation of a character who is clever, but untouched by any kind of compunction where her social ambitions are involved. Yet we are constantly won by her graces and impressed by her hard sense — no item of useless equipment for a woman who must get on. And the scales of sympathetic judgment are only slowly tilted against her as we feel her ruthless egotism gradually getting the best of her amiable traits. This treatment of character, not as a moral formula, but as a balance of qualities that are at least potentially virtues and vices, is a clear advance in the treatment of human values. Thackeray is, however, sufficiently the child of his age to accept positive moral standards and to apply them to his reading of character, but in the main with a remarkable restraint and clearness of mind. The result is a reaction on the reader's part that is equally free from pharisaical condemnation and sentimental pity. This free operation of Thackeray's moral judgment, free from moral prejudice, is seen also in the depiction of the minor characters, which are almost curiously accurate as well as truly comic embodiments of the Victorian social traditions. All are done in a gently and tolerantly satirical manner, with condonement for social errors and maladjustments, and ridicule for vapid young noblemen, rakish old statesmen, domineering dowagers, and designing mothers. It is a great panorama of con-

temporary social life, skilfully searching out the comedy of social pretension. The function of social criticism is seen, therefore, to be very active in Thackeray's work.

The novels of Thackeray's time were rather weighty things; and their complexity, or multiplicity, was as great as their length. Mere ingenuity in the handling of intricate and sustained complications of plot were exaggeratedly esteemed by readers of the time. Thackeray, however, and *Vanity Fair* is a case in point, avoided the gratuitous complication and the multiplication of minor characters to which Dickens was prone. The length of Thackeray's novels is due rather to deliberate, allusive, and digressive development. There is great pungency in Thackeray's satire, great knowledge of life in his comedy, but little of the concentration of treatment or brilliant compactness of phrase that today we call "snappy."

Altogether, the qualities that distinguish *Vanity Fair*, and that mark a stage in the increasing effectiveness of the novel, are its sound handling of social life through a searching but not ungentle satire, the breadth of its social horizon, and above all its discerning study of the evolution of character in a specific environment. Thackeray is not to be credited with sweeping innovations in all these respects, but his even and mature command of his medium establishes his eminence in these things above that of any of his contemporaries.

Treasure Island. — We may take Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1882) as a widely read and justly popular example of the romantic novel, or novel of adventure. It is a story of high quality and of almost pure type; for it reflects no kind of social criticism; it is so free from cross-currents of social interest that it does not even contain a love-episode; and it is avowedly and almost nakedly devoid of anything approaching psychologic subtlety. The situations are simple, the characters simple, the handling simple. The plot is sufficiently complicated, for the life-blood of a good story of adventure is plot. It has been called a "glorified penny-dreadful"; but this is not quite a fair judgment, because the ingredients of the story are really more carefully selected than that, and its niceness of tone is not the result of merely deodorizing a vulgar form. How is it, then, that a tale which stands so near the margin of "cheap" literature is conceded to be both artistic and respectable?

Probably the answer is contained first of all in the fact that Stevenson takes seriously the possibilities of the type. Most stories of the sort are elementary — obviously written for immature or undeveloped intelligences. *Treasure Island* is written with artistic conscience. Real art is brought to bear upon the simple type characterization, which is best, of course, where the types are most vivid. Young Jim Hawkins and Doctor Livesey are by virtue of their place in the action the principals; but the characters that

are done *con amore* are the glorious pirates, Billy Bones, Pew, Long John Silver, Israel Hands, and the rest. They could scarcely be surpassed. Similarly with the handling of the action; it is best where it is most thrilling. No one can forget the handing of the Black Spot to Billy Bones, or Jim's fight with Israel Hands in the shrouds of the Hispaniola. In these episodes there is no nearness to life, in the ordinary sense; but there is an extraordinary vitality. And vitality is what the novel of action must have if it has nothing else.

In Stevenson's hands this type of novel has also the qualities that make it an unquestionably artistic form. In *Treasure Island* there is less expenditure of calculated art than in *The Master of Ballantrae* or *The Ebb Tide*, but the simplicity of the narrative process is in perfect keeping with the youth of Jim Hawkins and the unpretending sense of Dr. Livesey, who are the tellers of the story. Beyond the visible features of brisk and thrilling narrative there is a deep insight into boy psychology, an apparently deliberate concentration upon an adventure-plot to the exclusion of even the faintest trace of a love-story, and above all a carefully studied atmosphere — as anyone will recognize who can call to mind the vigorous but unobtrusive pictures of sea-men and sea-ways — such as the fitting out of the vessel at Bristol, and the landing at Treasure Island.

There is no forcing of lessons of social wisdom in *Treasure Island*. The life presented is not an object

of study, but something justified by its own gusto. Here again we confront that prevailing difference in purpose between the realistic and the romantic novel, the latter wearing easily its rather elementary morality and serving pictorial rather than reflective purposes.

Clayhanger. — Mr. Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger* (1910) is a very good example of the type of modern novel which goes under the names of the "biographic novel," the "novel of social evidence," and other titles more or less descriptive. Its complication is slight, its order that of simple chronology, its scope the formative and critical years of an intelligent and active man, its purpose the study of social life through a careful sampling of individual experience, its point of view that of modern science.

Clayhanger is brought upon the opening scene as a boy just graduated from high school, and in the very first sentences we have a glimpse of Mr. Bennett's great interest in what we might call the "symptoms" of modern social life. In a rapid but exhaustively searching review of what the English school-system had done and left undone for Edwin Clayhanger we see in the boy a supreme unfitness for almost every practical and spiritual end. What is true of this more consciously present element in his environment is true as to its less visible but more fundamental features. The biological formula comes to light promptly: Edwin is, like all of us, the creature of two formative influences — his heredity and his

environment — neither of which he can avoid or alter, at least until their direct effects have done their worst and their best in the making of his character. The study of character becomes then, for Mr. Bennett, first of all the study of these two factors. To this end he gives us a very lengthy — and absorbingly interesting — history of the boy's father, in a passage which occupies a proportion of the total narrative that would have been unthinkable for a Victorian. It is a vivid and highly concentrated analysis of everything in the economic and social fabric of mid-nineteenth century society. Similarly Bennett orients Edwin's whole domestic background, with animated and fascinating pictures of his sisters, his aunt, his neighbors, the shop of his father in which he is employed, the streets, inns, theatres, community affairs, celebrations, and industries of his town. This is not novel-making in the old sense, for the simple reason that all these details would have been in the old method merely subsidiary and atmospheric. With Mr. Bennett they are fundamental, pervasive, always at the root of the action.

We see young Clayhanger, then, after Mr. Bennett's expenditure of half the bulk of his story in building up this basis for character, as the product of the formula, but only to the extent that any human being can be a mere product of any combination of controlling forces. When he comes to thinking years his appraisal of himself and the influences that have made him, induces a resistance to everything

that is merely conventional or mechanical in the society to which he belongs. This resistance takes its tangible (and thoroughly modern) form in questioning and readjustment. His will comes into play; his spirit reaches out for new influences, and the expansion of his life is given to us faithfully and intimately. Against his reflective judgment he falls in love with a woman who disappoints him — apparently quite shamefully, though her side of the story is told in a companion volume — *Hilda Lessways*. The novel stops with his meeting her a second time, after years of separation, when the two are reaching their middle years. In a third volume — *These Twain* — the story of their life together is taken up.

A glance at these salient features of *Clayhanger* will tell us that the thing in view is the study of "the case" as a guide to any ascertainable general ideas of life. This is not to say that the story is a mere case-book for social psychology, however, for the sureness of touch, the sympathy, and the humor of the book make it one of the most appealing of modern novels, as its accuracy in diagnosis makes it one of the most significant. But its modernity lies in just this aggregation of people and facts for the better understanding of social structure and tendencies. Here we find that ready and easy judgments as to the bases of personality and character have given way to considered and sympathetic study of the things that go to the actual making of character. Character

itself is regarded as a phenomenon, not as a peg upon which to hang moral precepts.

The short-story. — We have noted already that the most outstanding feature in the development of the novel of today is the cutting down of the mere length, mass, and complexity of the earlier novel. This principle of compression and economy has affected all narrative forms, but none in so revolutionary a way as the short-story. Just as the novel is not merely a more extensive accumulation of briefer story-parts, the short-story itself (in the modern sense, and with the hyphen to indicate its special meaning) is not merely a brief narrative. Indeed, there are many stories of twenty thousand words that in the modern and technical sense are more to be regarded as short-stories than others of one-tenth that length.

Before deciding upon what is implied in the present use of the term "short-story," let us note once more that the definition of any literary term is fixed by the usage attached to it. If the short-story seems today a thing of very specific appeal and conventionalized form, it is because readers have been attracted by these qualities, and have come to look for them. What distinguishes the short-story of today is very high technical perfection in a number of definite effects; and these effects are, every one of them, properly a part of the brevity of the story, and in some degree impossible to secure in a story of greater length. In other words, perfect art in the

management of a short-story recognizes both the limitations and the opportunities implicit in its shortness. The limitations of the form are, on the surface, the impossibility of presenting a situation of great complexity, a plot of very much spread, characterization in anything like minute detail, and digression of any kind or extent. Turning these initial disadvantages into the commanding virtues of his art, the short-story writer deals only with a strictly confined and readily analyzed situation, and a single plot with complete continuity and without digression; and intensifies the interest of both character and plot by cutting away the unnecessary and the merely ornamental, and exercising the severest and most discriminating choice of outstanding details. The effect secured is, briefly, the maximum of compression, intensity, and sharpness. Inevitably the concentration of attention upon these ideal and related qualities of economy of material and sharpness of impression produces an absolute unity of effect.

Short-story design. — Since the outstanding evidence of bad art in the short-story is diffuseness, or loose and digressive treatment, the type tends to develop emphasis upon certain chosen aspects of common narrative interest, but not upon all. If it deals intensively with character, it will probably make less of action and atmosphere. If it is a story of high color, it may be without precipitant movement or very minute portraiture. This tendency

to definite and confined emphasis we see in the stories of Poe, which can be readily catalogued as stories of particular effects. *Ligeiea*, *Eleonora*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, are all stories of atmosphere, without action, and without distinct characterization. *The Gold Bug*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Purloined Letter*, and *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, are all stories which develop the interest of unravelling mystery, without much of either character or background. *William Wilson*, *The Man of the Crowd*, and *The Tell-Tale Heart*, all deal with the specific interest of character, and that peculiarly sensitive and morbid character that Poe depicted with such painful exactitude.

With the same recognition of the artistic value of making the most of a single effect in an essentially uniform type, modern workers in the short-story have used a method which gives clearer values to all the elements of narrative interest, without sacrificing the emphasis which Poe achieved; for the truth is that Poe's stories are likely to lose by their narrowness of appeal what they gain in singleness of appeal. It is really important that unless the situation or the characters or the atmosphere have enough significance in themselves to carry most of the weight of story-interest, sufficient attention must be given to a proper balance of these interests. What this implies may be seen in even a very brief short story skilfully handled. *The Necklace*, by the famous French story-writer, Guy de Maupassant, has for

years been regarded as a model of that brevity combined with clear definition of all component parts, and sharpness of effect in some single respect of narrative interest, that have come to be looked on as the ideal achievements in the form. Let us glance briefly at its substance.

The Necklace. — In *The Necklace* we are introduced to Mathilde, wife of a poor government clerk, who in spite of personal charm and superb social gifts, leads a life of choked aspirations because of her social obscurity and lack of opportunity. Her character is not described lengthily — but sufficiently. One day an invitation to a great public ball is brought to her by her delighted husband; but she reads it with chagrin; for while it opens to her a vista of success, she knows she is too poor to accept it. Her husband, struck by her tragic misery, offers to buy her a dress, at the monumental cost, for him, of four hundred francs. But even with this, she is distressed, for she must have jewels for so brilliant an occasion. Finally she conceives the idea of borrowing them from an intimate friend, Mme. Forestier, who offers her freely whatever she needs; and she takes a magnificent diamond necklace. At the party she is the triumph of the occasion. Her beauty and splendor have won her place for her. She and her husband leave at the end of a long and happy evening, find a cab and are driven home. But blank despair succeeds to the elation of the last few hours; for she sadly draws back her cloak to take one last look at her elegance, and is stunned to find that the diamond necklace is no longer about her neck. It has been left in the cab, and cannot be recovered.

Concealing the loss from the owner upon a pretext, they set about replacing it, and finally buy for a sum that ruins the clerk, what seems to be a duplicate of the lost necklace. He has spent all his savings, and borrowed more in large and small amounts from friends, acquaintances, and usurers. Now to repay their debts! If it is desperate for him, it is for her too; but they meet the need heroically. They live on the verge of poverty, saving every penny, stopping at no drudgery, and at the end of ten years have paid every franc. But both are broken and old. She sometimes wonders, as she looks back at that brilliant moment in her youth, what would have come to her if life had not dealt so unkindly with her.

One day Mathilde encounters her friend, Mme. Forestier, upon the street — still young and beautiful; but Mathilde has changed so greatly that she is not recognized until she tells her name. The occasion brings out the story of the ruin of her hopes and happiness — by the loss of the necklace. Mathilde's friend doesn't understand — for the necklace was returned. And when Mathilde explains, Mme. Forestier seizes her hands pitifully, and says, "Ah, poor Mathilde, my diamonds were paste, and worth no more than five hundred francs."

The strength of the story lies in a great moment of surprise, beyond anticipation, but strictly logical. And this surprise is prepared for by only enough emphasis upon the characters of the clerk and his wife, their social background, and the pathetic situation into which they are plunged, to enable us to see and feel the full force of the tragedy. But how they

bore it is concealed from us — whether he was bitter and she resentful, we don't know. Nor do we know what happened after Mathilde's story was out; and here we see the tremendous difference between the older stories (like *Rip Van Winkle* and *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment*), which aim at completeness and roundness of effect, and the new type, which works for a single and sharp impression, and does not weaken that impression by carrying it beyond its greatest sharpness. This is what we mean by a story which conserves the outstanding element of interest.

It is the peculiarity of the surprise story that it must, for its greatest effect, place its climax at the very end of the story. O. Henry has a great facility in this trick, as we see in *The Gifts of the Magi* and *The Cop and the Anthem*, and in the cunning double surprise in *The Love Philtre of Ikey Schoenstein*. Yet the short-story in which the interest lies in other effects makes in the same degree the most of such special effects, at the same time preserving and utilizing whatever may stimulate interest in a subsidiary way. Jack London's *To Build a Fire* illustrates the point on the side of atmosphere. It is saturated with the atmosphere of the far northern winter, but it contains a good glimpse of the kind of character which grows in that environment, and a telling climax — death and desertion. A short-story which is almost all action, yet which deals adequately with character and environment, is Kipling's *The Devil*

and The Deep Sea or *William the Conqueror* — or almost any of the stories in his collection called *The Day's Work*. These stories are all symmetrical, yet always with a clearly outstanding feature in their design.

Unity of effect in the modern short-story should not be confused with rapidity of movement. A narrative which develops unswervingly to its conclusion may still move slowly. In Thomas Hardy's *The Three Strangers* we have a story which tells what it has to tell with great deliberation, yet also with great power. And Kipling is not at all averse to a development that does not rush forward on wings — witness *The Man Who Would be King* and *The Courting of Dinah Shadd*. Our Russian contemporaries, for example Tchekhov and Andreyev, have perfected a technique devoted to getting the most out of a situation or a character within the limits of the prescribed unity, accumulating grains of evidence with a care that is the very antithesis of the breathlessness so prevalent in the American magazine short-story.

This last point brings us to our last word with regard to the short-story in its most familiar modern form — that found in the weekly or monthly magazine that alternates story matter with advertisements of everything usable by human beings. These are often, possibly generally, stories of high technical excellence; but the fact that they are there to attract readers not to literature, but to advertisements,

means that they are probably written with the plainest of commercial motives, and with correspondingly depressing results. Any sweeping condemnation of so large a body of contemporary writing would seem to be lacking in discrimination. Yet it is fairly plain that a literature which is so industriously devoted to finding and feeding the popular taste is not going to be prolific of good things. Isn't the test that although we tell our friends that there was a "first-rate story in last week's *This or That*," we can't for the life of us remember a month hence what it was all about? This complete ephemerality in the mass of magazine fiction would seem to argue quite definitely against its quality, either literary or moral. And it is a bit saddening to reflect that the type of writing which attracts the majority of our readers today is very suggestive of the wholesale waste of a heedlessly busy economic life. However this may be, it is certainly true that the short-story form and the modern magazine have acted upon each other with tremendous results for the popularity of both. Whether this "marriage of convenience" will work out for better or for worse is a question that still seems to be upon the knees of the gods that give the answers to literary problems.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For an enlarged treatment of the materials and mechanics of fiction see Clayton Hamilton's *Manual of the Art of Fiction* (Doubleday, 1918).

Wilbur L. Cross's *The Development of the English Novel* (Macmillan, 1899) is still the best extended outline of tendencies in the development of the type from Richardson to the close of the nineteenth century. Richard Burton's *Masters of the English Novel* (Henry Holt, 1909) covers the same subject matter almost, if not quite, as satisfactorily. Both of these volumes, of course, are not of recent enough date to consider developments since 1900. Wilson Follett's *The Modern Novel* (Knopf, 1918) is a rather temperamental and designedly unsystematic view of æsthetic tendencies in the English and American novel.

The great bulk of discussion about the modern short-story centers upon the writing of it, rather than upon its literary place. Books upon short-story writing are of course extremely numerous, as are anthologies of the type, both historical and modern.

THE DRAMA

The drama is probably on the whole the literary form of widest distribution throughout the world and of greatest popularity throughout the ages. It is found in all stages of civilization, its directness, intimacy, and vitality appealing alike to the imaginations of quite unlettered people and to the critical sense of those with the most highly developed artistic consciousness. The reason for this is not far to seek, for, adding the art of impersonation to that of writing, the drama gives the most actively faithful picture of human life through immediate appeal to the emotions.

The study of the drama is particularly widespread today, not only because it stands, with the novel, as the most significant and representative literary form of our age, but because it comes closer to our sense of social truth than it has ever before done. In its social outlook the drama is an even more thoroughly democratized medium than the novel; and the prevalence of "community theatre" and "little theatre" movements has brought it within the reach of thousands, or millions, who under older conditions would not have been theatre-goers at all.

Yet it is probably still true that few students of the drama have the opportunity to study it strictly

within the theatre. For most of us the printed play must serve in greater or less degree as an actual basis of study; and for many of us it is all but the only means of access to the drama. Opinion, indeed, has varied as to the relative desirability of the written and the acted versions of a play; for while the professed theatre-goer (like probably the majority of us) regards the acting of a play as the indispensable test of its merit, the unorthodox view of those who are temperamentally readers rather than theatre-goers is expressed by the Russian dramatist Tchekov. He puts into the words of one of his characters a view of the question that is undoubtedly his own: "My opinion is that if a play is good, then there is no need to trouble the actors for it to make the proper impression. You can be satisfied by merely reading it. If the play is bad, no acting will make it good." We raise the question not because it is highly important, or particularly worth arguing, but because it establishes a valuable truth — that the play has an appeal for the reader as well as for the person who sees and knows it in its proper domicile — the theatre. Whatever the form of our contact with the study of the drama, then, we can find profit in it, remembering, however, that the ultimate test of the quality of a play is whether or not it can be produced effectually in a theatre. The corollary of this critical truism is that a play that "reads" well may go very badly upon the stage, and a play that "acts" well may have little interest

for a reader whose mind's eye cannot take in stage practice.

A play is essentially a narrative or story-telling form; and its components are therefore not markedly different from those of a story. True, it is a narrative of special form — that is, in its division into acts and scenes, and in its development exclusively by means of the conversation of the characters it depicts. It is likely also to be a narrative of restricted content, for it is instantly evident that in the greater freedom of the common story-forms much may be included that must be rejected in a play. For this reason a good story when dramatized frequently makes a bad play.

As a narrative form, the play is made, we have said, from the ingredients of the story. It is a representation of action, through characters, depicting in general a definite situation, with more or less definite setting, atmosphere, and the like. It may also, like the story, call in accessories such as local color and portraiture; but here the fixed limits of the play begin to separate it from the common story forms. Its rigid continuity deprives it of the expanse of other narrative forms; and certain effects, such as "description" — either of people or of places — are almost wholly impossible for it except as they are revealed as part of the actual matter of the action, or as they may be slipped into the interstices of action that we conventionally call stage directions.

The so-called "laws" of the drama are not arbitrarily fixed, but are simply a statement of the conditions of stage practice, varying from age to age and from country to country as the conditions and fashions of the stage may change, but maintaining a certain sub-stratum of fundamental practices that reflect the fact that a play is (if it is really a play) written for representation by actors upon an actual stage.

Dramatic art. — When we scrutinize the rules of dramatic content and structure, we see that they reflect different sets of conditions in the craft of both the playwright and the theatrical producer. We find that there are certain usages in playwriting that follow clear conceptions of what a play in fact is, that is, of the characteristic appeal that an audience (of either theatre-goers or readers) expects to find in it, and that the writer for that reason is practically compelled to provide. These determinants form the body of essentially "dramatic" theory. That theory changes in detail with every generation; but it is nevertheless true that the nature of the experience sought by the audience in the great open theatres of the Greeks has something definitely and always in common with that which we expect in a *théâtre intime* seating only a hundred people in a modern city side-street. The question with which "dramatic" theory is concerned, is what is and what is not effective matter for stage presentation.

Dramaturgy. — "Dramaturgic" principles, on the other hand, are those which have to do with the

actual form of the play as the outcome and expression of actual theatrical conditions. We may illustrate the difference between a dramatic and a dramaturgic problem by an example. The ancient Greek dramatist Euripides wrote two remarkably beautiful plays upon the story of Iphigeneia, the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, who was sacrificed by her father to insure the success of the expedition against Troy. The legend happens to be one of the most variable in the whole Greek mythology; so the dramatist has great freedom of choice in the handling of it. Euripides' version represents Iphigeneia as secretly saved by the goddess Diana at the very moment of her sacrifice, and carried off in safety to become a priestess of Diana. The conclusion of this first of Euripides' plays on the theme (*Iphigeneia in Tauris*) is a plain instance of the *deus ex machina*, the intervention of an outside force to settle a problem which should have been settled on its own moral merits. The story was differently treated by the French dramatist Racine in 1674. With the greatly differing social backgrounds and philosophies of these two writers, it is impossible that they should read character, motives, and ethical stimuli alike; so we find Racine introducing a motive which immediately makes the character of his heroine more complex, and the solving of the problem more logical because it is definitely attached to questions of character. The German romantic poet Goethe in 1787 produced still another dramatic ver-

sion of the story in which he gives the character of Iphigeneia an extraordinary moral exaltation. The events of the Iphigeneia story in these three versions of the legend do not vary greatly among themselves; but there are distinct changes in character and motivation which reflect changes in both the social and the artistic consciousness of the three writers. The emotional appeal varies with different casts of thought, but the dramatic interest is essentially the same in all three — a problem of family relations involving the moral attitudes and duties of father and daughter. All of these reinterpretations of character, revisions of motive, readjustments of the facts of the story, are matters of *dramatic* discretion, having to do with what the particular author feels to be most significant for the taste and temper of his own society, and most expressive of his own interest in the story. To an audience of Racine's time Euripides' play would have been too elemental in emotion, too nakedly poetic. To an audience of Euripides' time Racine's play would have been too full, too analytical, too subtle in its reading of character. Goethe's version shows the new romantic ideality of the late eighteenth century.

But beyond this the three plays differ among themselves in their architecture. Euripides' play was written for the Greek theatre, which knew nothing of the later division of a play into acts and scenes. It is divided into definite periods, however, by the choral interludes which were the distinctive feature

of the Greek drama. Racine's and Goethe's are built upon the more modern design, though both are in tone "classic." But they all differ from one another in their cast of characters, their entrances and exits, their critical moments, and their conclusions, not merely because the circumstances of the legend are handled differently, or because these different matters of action are differently stressed — but because these details have a varying importance in the *management* of the play. This is a dramaturgic consideration. The technical treatment of either play would have been bizarre and baffling to an audience whose theatre accomplished its ends through a special dramaturgy that grew out of existent and accepted conditions. Of this, more in its place.

Probably we can fix this distinction between the dramatic-literary elements in play-writing, and the dramaturgic (or architectural) elements, by noting down what each may be taken to embrace. At the same time we must remember that there is a particular danger in generalizations about dramatic art, as an art of highly varying forms; and we must differentiate carefully between the relatively few facts that are perennially and basically true because they are found in the practice of all times upon all stages, and those much more numerous "principles" that reflect the critical bias of this age or that.

What makes drama. — *Dramatic principles*, or views as to what a play is and what it should accomplish, comprise these:

(1) That it is mainly a representation of action, and that the nature of that action is struggle.

(2) That the idea of the play is embodied principally in a leading character, and that the struggle depicted is his struggle with other individuals, or with his environment, or with some personal problem.

(3) That the idea, or problem, or theme, or outstanding emotion of the play shall be sharply focussed for the audience.

(4) That the development of this problem shall give us as far as possible a more or less constant increment of interest, in other words shall lead up to a climax or high point which is not too remote from the conclusion of the play.

(5) That the solution shall be a real solution, consistent and logical, and shall have been adequately prepared for in the development of the situation.

Taking each of these considerations separately, let us see what they imply with regard to the substance of an acceptable play.

Action. — Our first proposition is that a play is a representation of action, and that the nature of that action is struggle. Of course our first impulse is to ask why. Why is a play concerned rather with action than with the depiction of character or the discussion of general ideas? Part of the answer is really no rational answer at all — that it has always

been that way. More of the answer is contained in the nature and the psychology of stage representation. A play is directed to the attention and interest of *all* of the members of an audience, not to a few, and the appeal to them is made through their impressionable senses rather than their reflective senses. This means that it must deal with a matter of collective or general interest, and that it must reach the emotions before it strikes the reason. While the play is actually going on there is no adequate time for reflection; it is the movement of things that captivates, and that captivates the imagination, not the intelligence. To be sure, there is any amount of leisure for reflection upon the matter of the play when the curtain has fallen and the mind has time to work; but while the play progresses the mind can take in little more than the march of events; and the march of events is action. All the problems raised about Hamlet's character or the workings of his mind have been raised in the study, not in the theatre. Besides this, we must accept the fact that the playwright's power of communication is necessarily incomplete. All that we can really know of the progress of the action comes from what we see and hear on the stage. The conversation of people (stage dialogue is simply conversation) does not possess the resources for exposition of character, motive, individual background, and the dozen collateral interests of story-forms, that we find in the passages of deliberate exposition, the interpolated

judgments, and the completeness of character-description upon which the writer of fiction may depend. *Hamlet*, once more, is the most discussed play ever written; and Hamlet himself is, even for a central figure, an extraordinarily conspicuous figure in that play. About the drift and meaning of his actions we are never in doubt, but whole volumes are filled with speculation about his nature, his mind, his motives — things that can never be minutely represented through the normal possibilities of stage dialogue.

Why the struggle as the focus of dramatic action? Is it again because it has always been so, or because any significant problem of action *must* involve a struggle? There are, of course, two sides, or two incentives, in every problem of action, whether the problem introduces contending individuals or contending ideas or moral conceptions. Naturally the very statement of the last question involves another question — Why the problem? This question touches part of our second proposition — that the central idea of the play is embodied or illustrated in the leading character. An idea is in its nature a problem. Its interest centers in the fact that it may be questioned and even confuted. Anyone moving under the impulse of an idea is moving, necessarily, against opposition. The force of an idea lies simply in its power to combat other ideas, and the apostle of an idea is a combatant. This is no less true when the idea is not one of significant social moment than

when it is. Othello's jealousy (an idea, in the sense of a conception with motive power) affects himself and Desdemona almost exclusively; but with quite comparable force to that of Hamlet's facing the whole world of action. Indeed the motive in Othello's case may be more dramatic, though strictly personal, than the motive in Hamlet's, because its propulsive force is greater. It makes action, visible action. There is more stir of the theatre in *Othello* than in *Hamlet*, although *Hamlet* gives us infinitely more to think about.

Character. — That the central idea of the play should be represented through a leading character seems almost self-evident, since any compelling emotion is likely to be illustrated most effectually in a single character. True, this emotion might be shared with other characters, as in the situation of two men in love with the same woman, but some special sympathy, or some sense of superior desert in one or the other, would be likely to influence both the playwright and the audience, and this would make one character superior to the other as an exponent of the idea. Again the principle is rooted in the psychology of the audience: the audience wants someone to favor, for emotions are never impartial. Where we find a number of figures instead of a single figure typifying the central emotion, that emotion is likely to be in the first place a collective emotion, one that can be felt in its entirety by a number of people with the same sympathetic intensity and the

same power to stimulate action. In the second place such a distribution of the motive idea among a group of characters in a play is likely to be due to the deliberate repudiation of the practice of "starring" parts. Both these conditions are present in Gerhardt Hauptmann's *The Weavers*. This play is a "naturalistic" document, an attempt to confute the idea that significant moments in life are typified specially in outstanding and heroic figures. Its emotion — resistance to industrial oppression — is also one that not only can, but must be felt by a large group represented in the action. But there is no central character here for the reason that Hauptmann refused on principle to isolate one person to embody his idea with particular effect. We can say with reasonable assurance, then, that the employment of a character of special force to represent a dramatic idea is not an arbitrary device, but one implicit in the very nature of human passion. Where that passion is shared, other figures share the importance of a central figure. *Romeo and Juliet* is not the story of Romeo, or of Juliet, but of Romeo *and* Juliet. Yet is there any question as to which of the two is the more dramatic figure — representing more consummately the power of the emotion of love?

In discussing this question of character as embodying the dominant emotion, we may discover that character needs to be expounded only as far as the purposes of that emotion require. Are we interested in Romeo and Juliet as persons or as lovers? In

fiction the study of character is frequently the central matter of interest; in the drama our interest in character is necessarily limited to what we see of it in action; for in the drama as in life, our knowledge of character can come only from our knowledge of what people say and do.

The dramatic problem. — Our third proposition under the head of dramatic principles is that the idea, problem, theme, outstanding emotion of the play shall be clearly focussed. This seems self-evident. In most great plays we are likely to find that the subject matter of the play is quite unambiguous. In the Shakespearian tragedies this subject matter is so simply and clearly conceived that we can name it in a word or two. In *Macbeth* it is ambition, in *Othello* jealousy, in *King Lear* the futility of old age. Where motives are more recondite the subject matter may be less easily expressed, but it ought to be clearly visible. It may take the form of a proposition, as in Ibsen's *Ghosts:* the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children; or his *Doll's House:* a woman's life should not be sacrificed to the affairs and interests of her husband. Or it may deal in a wholly general way with some question of human interest — as Granville Barker's *Madras House* does with the question of woman's status in society, handled from a number of points of view, and with no attempt at a final solution; or as Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* deals with the problem of social regeneration through rationally selec-

tive marriage. It would be inferred, however, that the clearer and more elemental the informing idea, the more readily the action evolves from that idea, and the more effectually centralized is the play as a whole. This is seen in the fact that both Barker's and Shaw's plays just referred to tend to break down into rambling and diffuse discussion. On the latter point, however, it is well to avoid dogmatism, since in our rational age there is a place for " plays of discourse," although they are as yet far from being popular.

Cumulative interest. — Our next statement as to dramatic effectiveness is that the play shall show an increment of interest throughout its development. This it is bound to do if it has an effective complication, for the knitting and unravelling of plot is commonly the groundwork of interest either in the drama or in fiction. A play, however, can less permissibly be " episodic " than a piece of fiction. If it is centered in an idea, and if it depicts struggle, its development is the better for being well integrated. In Hauptmann's *Weavers*, which we have already mentioned, the development is superficially episodic, since each successive act merely adds to the signs of industrial unrest in the previous acts; but the play also demonstrates that enough cause of discontent will bring about a social crisis; so there is more logical continuity than appears on the surface. It is worth noting, too, that *The Weavers* is a protest against " conventional " technique; so it is in fact a

tour de force of revolutionary dramatic theory. In Galsworthy's *Strife* much the same incident is handled as in *The Weavers*, but with greater reliance upon the accepted sources of dramatic interest. Comparison of the two plays may reveal a good deal with regard to dramatic development.

The solution. — The last element in our scheme is that of a logically satisfactory solution. The Greek critic Aristotle, writing of the practice of his own stage, embraces this consideration with the last two, in his statement that tragedy "has a beginning, a middle, and an end." By this he means that there must be a cause for, or a precipitant of, the action, sufficient in itself and not harking back to other and antecedent causes; and that from this cause there must proceed a development of action which leads logically and consistently to a true conclusion, that is, a conclusion which satisfies us, not merely as reasonable and just, but as the one adequate conclusion for the particular problem. No proposition would seem to require less argument. We all resent the ending of a play by some stroke of either happy or unhappy accident. If the characters in the play mean anything to us, we expect the solving of their destinies to have some visible relation to what we know of their characters.

Aristotle's "beginning, middle, and end" is a highly suggestive phrase, but its terms may be a bit misleading. His beginning is a precipitant cause of action; it may not be actually the first of the se-

quence of events that make up a play. If we accept the theme of Ibsen's *Ghosts* as the proposition that children suffer for the sins of their fathers, we shall see that the element of cause in this play is not brought to our notice at the opening of the action, but is revealed to us bit by bit as the action progresses. Similarly the middle, the development from cause to effect, may be greatly contracted, as it is in *King Lear*. The middle or " rising action " of a play is generally taken to end with the crisis — the point at which some action, choice, or attitude of the principal determines the nature of the outcome. This fatal choice in *King Lear* seems to be made in the opening scene, and the greater part of the play would appear to be an extraordinarily sustained conclusion. There is no middle here of appreciable length. Cause runs into result instantaneously, though the result is delayed in its full manifestation. Aristotle's " end " of action, however, is all but invariably the end of the play, in fact as well as in function, although there are one or two instances of smart play-making in which the end is given as the opening of action, and the beginning and middle follow as an explanation.

Dramaturgic principles. — These considerations of dramatic art are, once more, those that apply to the author's choice, judgment, and discrimination in the handling of the *substance* of his play. They are not concerned with his *workmanship*, that is, his handling of the tools of his trade and his manage-

ment of his shop-technique. These latter matters, matters of *dramaturgy*, we can likewise tabulate for convenience, and discuss at more length. Let us phrase them also as propositions.

(1) The action must be developed through a clear and well framed plot.

(2) All action must be expressed through the characters participating in it, and through the medium (all but exclusively) of dialogue. Exposition of situation, setting, etc., must also be accomplished largely through the medium of dialogue.

(3) Stage directions may supplement dialogue with regard to matters which the eye can take in as part of an actual stage performance.

(4) Lapse of time and change of scene must cut the play up into certain periods of continuous action (that is, acts and scenes with intervals).

(5) Entrances, exits, "curtains," stage-pictures, "plants," and other devices of the stage may be utilized to emphasize important characters, moments, or details.

It is in the direction of "practical" dramaturgy that most of the important developments in the modern drama have taken place. Few modern plays have the weight of strictly literary appeal that we find in the later tragedies of Shakespeare; but most modern plays surpass Shakespeare's in the in-

genious use of the devices of the drama for dramatic effect. This is an important point. It justifies Mr. Shaw's claim that his plays are "better than Shakespeare's," in the sense that they represent the actualities of life more effectually for the modern consciousness through the actual theatre of today. To Shakespeare a serious play contained five acts — an arbitrary and meaningless convention. His dialogue was conceived as poetry, not, in the main, as talk. His exposition was formal, obvious, and sometimes protracted. He relied upon soliloquies and asides for the revelation of important facts. Almost all matters of stage interpretation were left to the mercies of actors and managers, not embodied in instructive stage directions. No writer of an acting-play of the present would be so careless of the precise means of creating precise theatrical effects, or so dominated by the formal definitions of his art. This is of course a strictly non-literary judgment. It has to do only with the superior "actableness" of the modern play.

We have already discussed plot-structure in relation to narrative forms (pp. 35–39) and as a matter of dramatic values (pp. 89–91). In the building of a play, however, we find that there are important technical considerations that effect, or even control, the management of plot.

Plot. — The close integration and the completeness of good dramatic action require, in the first place, that the plot of a play be "tight," not diffuse, as it

is in a novel like Thackeray's *The Newcomes* or Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*. This means the elimination of digression, which the dramatic practice of all ages has agreed to avoid. What looks like digression in the grave-digger's scene in *Hamlet* or in the badinage of the fool in *King Lear* is less digression than deliberate diversion — either a clearly purposed relief from tragic tension, or (more probably?) the author's amused trifling with his own art. Even in the double plots of the Elizabethan stage (Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* is an example) the sub-plot is not a digression, or a rambling from the path of main interest, but is collateral with, and clearly subordinated to, the main plot throughout its entire development. That the plot cannot be broken, cannot be left with loose ends, and must be brought to some kind of real conclusion, are all general principles, as well as technical.

Suspense. — It is not enough, however, that dramatic plot should have the qualities that retain an audience's interest; it must create, and even force that interest. The challenge of the subject, of clever characterization, of logical plot, invite interest, but may not compel it. What is needed is that the audience be kept in a condition of expectancy, constantly looking forward to the next development. This is of course the principle of suspense. It consists not merely in working toward a climax, but in keeping the sense of climax before the audience. However the audience may be made to feel the

import of the situation, grave or light, the particular nature of the conclusion must be kept from it. In *The Merchant of Venice* we see how play architecture accomplishes this end. Lines of sympathy with Bassanio, of mingled contempt and pity for Shylock, are established from the opening of action; the problem of the outcome is always kept before our eyes as the ultimate interest; yet effectual concealment of the particular solution to be reached is the very condition of our attention. The pressure of events is always upon this solution, but the solution itself is artfully delayed. Suspense in single scenes may be seen in Sheridan's management of the screen episode in *The School for Scandal*, in the conduct of Mrs. Dane's examination in Sir Henry Arthur Jones's *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, in Othello's gradual subjection to the vicious designs of his Nemesis, Iago, in the steady but cunningly delayed movement of the trial scene in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Dialogue. — The dialogue of a stage play always appears to be something that it is not. Ideally, in a realistic drama, at least, it should sound like everyday talk. In fact it cannot actually be that. Every play is a concentrated piece of action. Whether it conveys the events of some years or of a few hours, it is concentrated. The very dramatic significance of the events depicted and of the characters portrayed must "weight" the conversation of those characters heavily. We may take Ibsen's *Ghosts* again as a play which represents little more actual

lapse of time than that required to play it on the stage, for the action embraces less than twenty-four hours. It would be impossible, however, to evolve the full force of its dominant idea without the severest economy and precision in the use of language. Every word spoken by the three principals is loaded with its share of revelation of the meaning of the play, and with a special function in the depiction of character, for the opposed views of the conventional and of the free mind are typified in two unusually clearly drawn personalities — Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving. All of these ends must be realized through the dialogue; so the dialogue must be molded to the playwright's purposes — it cannot represent the mass of incidental give and take, the hesitancies, the incompleteness, the danger of misapprehension, which we find in ordinary conversation. It must convey instantly, transparently, and accurately the things that it is dramatically necessary for it to convey.

That dialogue is almost the sole effective means of communication between writer and audience seems self-evident. At the most, gesture, facial expression, and the like must supplement the play of dialogue. Whatever may be said for pantomime, it has little effect in the expression of any more than the primary emotions; and its place in a play of written words is always secondary, though at moments important. In August Strindberg's playlet *The Stronger* there are only two parts — one a speaking

part, the second a silent part — this character sitting throughout with her back to the audience. It has been said that the cleverer actress would prefer the silent part, but there is plenty of reason to doubt it. All the initiative in the play belongs to the speaking part; the pantomime is only responsive.

Action and character. — The statement that it is through character that we get dramatic action has already been made; also that the representation of character in the drama need be no more than will satisfy the purposes of the play. Aristotle says "Without action there can be no tragedy; without character there may be." On the other hand Mr. Galsworthy makes the observation that "the best plot in the world is a human being." Both remarks bring us to the conclusion that action and character in the drama are interdependent. That interdependence is in the drama of today beginning to verge upon a study of character as the real end of the serious dramatist. At least the action tends more and more to "illustrate" character, since it is the product of character. For example, in Arnold Bennett's *Milestones* we find a play built upon the idea that the new truth of one generation becomes outworn prejudice in the next. The action of the play carries us through three scenes depicting three generations, the young people of the first being the grandparents of the third. The interest, however, lies rather in vigorous characterization than in the events that pass before our eyes. The action seems to be simply

the inevitable expression of the characters; and it is only through a supremely adequate characterization that the author can support his idea that individuality, for all its centration in human will, is cast, generally speaking, in the mold of thought, old or new, of its own day. Of course this trend is in accord with the modern tendency of "realism" to interest itself in the human being as the source of action rather than in that action as a thing of primary importance.

Exposition. — Dialogue must convey not only action, however, and character as far as character is a matter of first interest, but everything preliminary or external to the action which is necessary to the understanding of it. The reason for this lies first of all in the fact that the cause (Aristotle's "beginning") or the underlying motive of action may possibly not be a part of the action itself. The audience must know, for instance, in *Hamlet*, that Hamlet's father has died under circumstances that have aroused suspicion; and a group of soldiers on the battlements of the castle at Elsinore are introduced merely to communicate this fact through their conversation. This method of exposition is of course crude — scarcely less so than the inexpert dramatist's introduction of the maid and butler discoursing on the family history before the family itself comes in to breakfast. In Ibsen's *Ghosts* we find a mixture of two methods — an opening scene in which the maid of the Alving household and her foster-father reveal

certain intrinsically important facts that are mere preliminaries to the action, followed by a development of plot throughout which the principals themselves bring to light slowly but fully the facts that form the foundation of the play. In plays in which the revelation of antecedent facts forms the center of dramatic interest, it is almost necessary that exposition shall take this latter form — as we see in Henry Arthur Jones's *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, or A. W. Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*.

Generally speaking, good exposition is self-concealing; poor exposition self-evident. That is, good exposition seems to justify itself as part of the regular give and take of conversation. It may be casual, or it may be direct and purposed, but it should at least appear to be natural and should fit naturally in the situation before us. Even the maid and the butler may be made effective instruments of exposition if it is not evident on the face of things that they exist only for that purpose. Conventional exposition may be seen in what is on the whole a technically smooth play — Sir A. W. Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. In the first act of this play the author finds it necessary to explain why Aubrey Tanqueray's first marriage was a disappointment. Tanqueray has called together three or four of his intimates to announce his intention of marrying again, and in an interval during which he is out of the room this conversation takes place.

Drummle (*anxiously*): Deuce take it, the man's second marriage mustn't be another mistake! (*With his head bent he walks to the fire-place.*)

Jayne: You knew him in his short married life, Cayley. Terribly unsatisfactory, wasn't it?

Drummle: Well — (*looking at the door*) — I quite closed that door?

Misquith: Yes.

Drummle (*smoking, with his back to the fire*): He married a Miss Herriott; that was in the year eighteen — confound dates — twenty years ago. She was a lovely creature — by Jove, she was; by religion a Roman Catholic. She was one of your cold sort, you know — all marble arms and black velvet. I remember her with painful distinctness as the only woman who ever made me nervous.

So the conversation progresses, communicating by direct narrative a number of details which orient the whole previous married life of Tanqueray. The artificiality of the process is felt in the fact that this practically uninterrupted speech conveys details that ought to have been known to Tanqueray's friends, and that the occasion for it is deliberately created by Tanqueray's departure "to finish a couple of letters" — not a very acceptable excuse for a host's absence. In a word, this piece of exposition is not implicit in the time and place and the relations of the group of characters who evolve it. It is simply exposition — by itself and complete in itself. After Drummle has finished, we need to know nothing more of Tanqueray's first marriage. But the action has been interrupted, in some degree seriously and unreasonably, to give us these facts.

To escape direct and obvious exposition is always difficult, sometimes all but impossible. In *Ghosts*, to which we have already alluded, there is generally a thoroughly discreet and well concealed exposition. If we take as an instance the revelation of the fact that Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving were once attached to each other, we find that Ibsen first " plants " this idea by showing us that Pastor Manders has a certain reticence about staying under Mrs. Alving's roof, although Mrs. Alving thinks that this is rather ridiculous for " us two old people." Some time later we learn from subtle but well directed hints that when Mrs. Alving came to him for help in her early married life she came not merely to " a trusted and intimate friend," but to a man who feared for himself because he loved her. Late in the play we are told the story of their romance and their parting, when the time is ripe to establish the idea that a marriage for love is a true marriage, while one for money is merely a ceremonial sale of one's individuality. All of these things come to light in the most unobtrusive way. Yet in the same play, when Ibsen first sets out upon the great and masterly exposition of the dead Captain Alving's fateful life, he begins with a long colloquy between Manders and Mrs. Alving, the first words of which, " Do you remember —," reveal the fact that they are going to recall events that could by no possibility have been forgotten. They seem to be, as they are, speaking to the audience here, not to each other.

It seems superfluous to say that exposition should reveal as clearly and promptly as is artistically possible everything that an audience should know. No necessary motive should be unexplained, no action obscure in import. It is a corollary to this that there should be no concealment from the audience, unless that concealment furnishes the point of interest in the scene. We may ask ourselves whether the screen scene in *The School for Scandal* would be as effective as it is if the audience were not a party to the secret of Lady Teazle's hiding place, or whether the scene in Lord Darlington's rooms in *Lady Windermere's Fan* would mean much to an audience that did not know Lady Windermere was standing behind the draperies.

We have dwelt upon this single aspect of the use of dialogue for the furtherance of action, because nothing can represent better than the processes of dramatic exposition the limitations placed upon the playwright's art, and the value of high technical accomplishment in the concealment of the devices attached to that art.

Stage directions. — Stage directions are a product of relatively modern times. Until about two hundred years ago all but the barest facts as to the goings and comings of the actors were left to the invention of the producer of a play. Today no technically trained playwright would submit a play to a manager without definite indications not merely of the necessary arrangement of scenery and properties for each

act, but of stage grouping, gesture, facial expression, and the like, at important dramatic moments. This fact has its meaning when we remember that this particularity in the playwright's technical practice goes hand in hand with a much more highly developed technique in production. All of the arts of the theatre today — the writer's, the actor's, and the manager's — rely less and less for their effect upon the mere rhetoric of the written play, and increasingly upon stage expedients for securing a greater likeness to life. For this reason the playwright must employ a greater explicitness to meet the refinements of production that the stage of today can command.

Stage directions, as such, exist, of course, simply for the purpose of indicating those devices and stage effects that are not self-evident in the actual text of the play. The "literary" stage-direction, however, is an outgrowth of later usage and an adjustment to the tastes and interests of readers of plays instead of theatre-goers. Stage directions of this sort may convert a thoroughly usable stage-play into a very satisfactory form of continuous narrative, what we might almost call a novelette in dialogue. All those forms of communication that we have already said lie outside the ordinary limitations of play-writing are actually introduced into the work of many modern dramatists conscious of an audience of readers as well as one in the theatre. For example, conventional stage directions touch only the

scenery that can actually be put upon the stage; and any ideas we may have as to the detailed character of the social environment "outside the walls" can be inferred only from the setting and from what the characters in the play may say. Bernard Shaw, however, at the very opening of his play *Candida* gives us four pages of highly effective general description of both the physical and social environment of the action. He tells us first of the conventional and hum-drum neighborhood, then of its conventional and spiritless habitués, passing on to the exterior of the house which is the scene of the play. This is

> A semi-detached villa with a front garden and a porch. Visitors go up the flight of steps to the porch: trades-people and members of the family go down by a door under the steps to the basement, with a breakfast room, used for all meals, in front, and the kitchen at the back. Up-stairs, on the level of the hall door, is the drawing-room, with its large plate-glass window looking on the park.

This room is actually represented on the stage. The directions which follow describe the disposition and properties of the room — legitimate matter for the common sort of stage directions, but even these directions embrace facts that are pointed at the consciousness of a reader and not at the practical problems of a stage manager. When we are told that the room is

> fitted with bookshelves on which an adept eye can measure the parson's divinity and casuistry by a complete set of Browning's Poems and Maurice's Theological Essays, and guess at

his politics from a yellow-backed Progress and Poverty, Fabian Essays, A Dream of John Ball, Marx's Capital, and a half a dozen other literary landmarks in socialism,

we see that the writer is dealing with details that cannot be imparted to a theatre audience, since he knows that the people in the very first row cannot read these titles on the backs of the Reverend James Morell's books. Mr. Shaw goes on to give us important items of information with regard to Morell's church and social connections, and actually describes him for us in terms that defy full interpretation upon the stage: He is

a vigorous, genial, popular man of forty, robust and good-looking, full of energy, with pleasant, hearty, considerate manners. . . . He is a first rate clergyman, able to say what he likes to whom he likes, to lecture people without setting himself up against them. . . . His well-spring of spiritual enthusiasm and sympathetic emotion has never run dry for a moment. . . . Withal a great baby, pardonably vain of his powers, and unconsciously pleased with himself.

Some of these items may be inferred — though not immediately — from the action; but others are transparently trespasses (clever and in every way for us to be thankful for) upon the old property of the writer of fiction.

Acts and scenes. — The division of a play into acts and scenes is simply the playwright's compromise with time and space. While there is no practical limit to the period that the action of a play may cover — Mr. Shaw's *Back to Methusaleh* moves

easily under a burden of thousands of years — what is actually represented is only the fractions of time that the "two hours' traffic of the stage" may embrace. An act in a rationally constructed play is simply a resumption of action after what the audience must take to be a greater or lesser lapse of time. A scene is a change of scene, primarily. Both terms are used loosely, however. Occasionally what is called an act is really a change of scene; and both acts and scenes are constantly used to break the action into its major episodes.

These dividing lines in the building-up of action have therefore a logical use: to point out the steps by which the action is developed. We no longer have the numerous "accidental" scenes of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, which were often not real units of action, but meaningless shifts of time or place. The playwright of today is much too aware of the diffuseness and the check to the momentum of his play that result from over-numerous and unessential acts and scenes. Our present tendency, then, is toward few acts and even fewer scenes within the act. But there are also severe practical limitations upon reducing the number of the organic divisions of a play. In the first place, few significant actions work themselves out from cause to event in the brief time that the business of the stage may permit. That is because human relations do not grow with magic rapidity. A two hour play in a single act and with a single set — which can be nothing more

than a depiction of two hours' transactions — is conceivable, but far from ideal. Shaw's *Getting Married* is such a play. But it is not a play of action; it is an interchange of views by a group of highly reflective and clear-spoken characters. There is furthermore an utterly practical bar to the reduction of acts and scenes to less than a vaguely felt but effective minimum. The concentration and incisiveness of dramatic action place a stress upon the attention of an audience that ought to be broken in order to save them from mental weariness. The breaks between the acts are periods of rest and adjustment that bring the audience back to the play with more alertness and animation.

The act or the scene, as not merely a chronological but a logical division of play-structure, must contain its own structural logic. We have seen that a play gives us usually a steady increment of interest up to a fitting termination of the action. Each act also, as a unit, plays its particular part in this growth of interest, developing a step or phase of action complete in itself, but knit with what has gone before and with what follows. In a play built upon this principle of rising action it is necessary that a spectator actually feel the formal divisions of the play as completed steps in the accomplishment of the action. Ideally, then, every act, at least, and every scene in some degree, should contain its own rise of action to an effect of climax. This suggests theatricality if it is not managed with discretion. In Henry Arthur

Jones's *Michael and His Lost Angel*, for example, we find a succession of five acts built up to high emotional climaxes, but climaxes unduly dependent upon coincidence and stage " business."

Devices of the theatre. — Today there is more than a little tendency to question the value of such " curtains " as theatrical devices, for the obvious reason that they bear too conspicuously the imprint of the device. Yet we cannot blink the fact that any expedient which helps to clarify or to emphasize the outstanding points of dramatic action must have its use. There are many such methods of emphasis known to the dramatist — the most important, after the curtain, the *entrance* and the *exit*.

Entrances and exits. — An entrance is logically no more than the word itself implies; in theatrical art it is much more. It is relatively rare that a principal in a play is seen upon the stage when the curtain rises for the first act. Interest in him is created through allusion or discussion before he appears, and his entrance is timed for its greatest effect. In Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* the central character is Mrs. Erlynne, an adventuress over whom Lord and Lady Windermere have fallen into an altercation which may destroy their former confidence and happiness in each other. Enough is said about Mrs. Erlynne to tell us that Lord Windermere's interest in her must be explained by some honest and high-minded purpose, of which his wife is ignorant. Lord and Lady Windermere break upon the question of

Mrs. Erlynne's admission into their home. Lady Windermere threatens to insult her publicly if she appears, and her husband is on the point of revealing the truth of his connection with Mrs. Erlynne when he is interrupted by the announcement of her arrival. This is an example of " prepared " entrance, interest in Mrs. Erlynne's character having been carefully built up before she appears.

As an example of another type of entrance let us take Henrik Ibsen's *The Master Builder*. Halvard Solness, an aging architect, is beginning to feel the pressure of rivalry from his younger competitors. The experience is painful and portentous to him, because he regards it as not merely a disturbing fact in his worldly affairs, but a symbol of the break-up of his declining years. As he talks the matter over with his physician, he puts his sense of the situation into one telling phrase: " Even now the rising generation is knocking at my door." Almost as he finishes the sentence there is a tap at the door, and Hilda Wangel enters. It turns out that she carries his fate in her hands. This is not a prepared entrance — for there is nothing in the action down to this point that leads us to expect Hilda, but it is a beautifully " timed " entrance, highly effective, though of course in a strictly theatrical way.

In another play of Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken*, we have a " pictorial " entrance of great effect, prepared for by only a sentence or two of suggestion. At this point in the play the character in question

says not a single word, but merely passes across the stage and out.

A slender lady, dressed in fine, cream-white cashmere, and followed by a *Sister of Mercy* in black, with a silver cross hanging by a chain on her breast, comes forward from behind the hotel and crosses the park toward the pavilion in front on the left. Her face is pale, and its lines seem to have stiffened; the eyelids are drooped and the eyes appear as though they saw nothing. Her dress comes down to her feet and clings to the body in perpendicular folds. Over her head, neck, breast, shoulders and arms she wears a large shawl of white crepe. She keeps her arms crossed upon her breast. She carries her body immovably, and her steps are stiff and measured. The *Sister's* bearing is also measured, and she has the air of a servant. She keeps her brown piercing eyes incessantly fixed upon the lady.

The exit is a less potent device than the entrance, partly because the principals are likely to be on the stage when the curtain falls upon any important scene in which they have participated, and partly because its force may depend more upon the weight of the situation than upon the actual conduct and carriage of the character in question. Still, when the situation creates an exit that can be featured, the effect may be profound, as we see in Nora's departure in the concluding scene of Ibsen's *Doll's House*.

Plants. — Another device which the stage employs for the accentuation of ideas is repeated reference to a centrally important fact, incident, or property. This is of course a rhetorical device, not limited to

the stage, but its value for theatrical art is at once apparent when we recall the fact that it is impossible in dialogue to expound the importance of many matters which would readily fix themselves in the mind of the reader of a story through direct exposition. This accounts for the frequent and necessary resort to " plants," or references to things or incidents the importance of which is to appear later in the action. In Galsworthy's *Loyalties*, for instance, we are informed that a certain down-at-heels character has descended to the making of a small amount on a wager that he can accomplish a sensational standing jump. The incident is in itself a little bizarre, but we see the value of the allusion when it is linked up as the identifying mark of a clever criminal. In Augustus Thomas's *Witching Hour* a man is killed with a heavy ivory paper-knife. The stage directions indicate two pieces of " business " with this property before it is brought into action ; and in the New York production it was further " planted " by a character's actually saying something to the effect that " You could kill a man with that paper-knife." In Ibsen's *Ghosts* all room for doubt as to who set fire to the orphanage is eliminated by Mrs. Alving's remark very early in the play that Engstrand was always careless with his matches. All these are rather artless exposures of the dramatist's purpose. Quite a different effect is found in the opening scenes of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, in which the protracted talk about unhappy and impossible marriages

focusses our interest upon the marital venture that Aubrey Tanqueray is about to undertake. Here the attention is not merely directed to a purpose of the dramatist's, but gives the keynote to the whole tone of the play.

Consistency of tone. — It was a convention of the classic drama that the conclusion of a play should determine its tone. The Greeks, conceiving things largely and consistently, never confused the intent of tragedy and of comedy, and this point of view has all but ruled dramatic art down to within recent years. We have seen already that the common source of both tragic and comic feeling is the sense of the incongruity of some action or situation, the dramatic effect of which depends less upon its actual nature than upon its outcome. It is not difficult, for example, to imagine a tragic ending for *The Merchant of Venice*. If Shylock had got his pound of flesh, the play would not have been a comedy. Likewise, it is easy to see that only trifling changes would be needed to alter the whole bearing of circumstance in a tragedy like *Othello;* a timely word would have saved Desdemona from her pitiful end. We are not so far wrong, therefore, when we speak of a comedy as a play with a happy ending, and of a tragedy as one with a sad ending. It is true, however, that the general tone of a play is likely to be in accord with the ending to be expected. The handling of a tragic theme is grave; the handling of a comic theme light. However true it may be that we

could imagine a tragic conclusion to *The Merchant of Venice*, and however our feelings may be wrought upon by the danger which Antonio faces in the court-room scene, we do not really anticipate his ruin; for the treatment of the theme has from the beginning pointed toward the eventual happiness of Antonio and his friends. The temper and action of a comedy, then, are as essentially part of its nature as the final disposition of the characters. This consistency, however, is only literary consistency — the consistency of art, not of life. Its relations in cause and effect are those that inhere in the idea of dramatic unity. If we could read life in the same way, we should all be prophets.

We recognize "higher" and "lower" forms of both comedy and tragedy. In "high comedy" and "pure tragedy" the problem envisaged is one of character, and our interest in the character is what interests us in the outcome. Where the situation and action are paramount, with lessened interest of character, we have not high comedy, but farce; and not tragedy, but melodrama. We must remember, however, that there are good farces — such as Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest.* Farce may be saved by wit — an intellectual quality; melodrama, however, seems almost always to be regarded with critical contempt.

Comedy. — The word comedy, then, is used in a general way to apply to any play which is not prevailingly serious in tone and which brings its char-

acters out of their difficulties into a region of sunshine, or at least calm. It must not be thought that either the manner or the ending of a comedy need be actively amusing. In fact the greater number of our comedies are not jocose, but are delicate in humor; and in many writers of comedy, like Goldsmith and Sheridan and Molière, we find gentle and graceful treatments of social perplexities and personal character which carry the weight of a serious lesson, but without the tragic emphasis. Such comedies possess a special fitness for holding up to view the "social vices," as they have been called, defects of character not as a rule grave enough to blast a career or to poison social life, but nevertheless plainly visible sources of unhappiness and misunderstanding. Such is Goldsmith's treatment of the weakness of careless compliance in his *Good Natured Man*, and J. M. Barrie's handling of a husband's self-assurance in *The Twelve Pound Look*.

Refined comedy, like tragedy, aims at presenting a question of conduct. That is, its central theme gives us an individual confronting a problem of action, but solving it in some pleasantly acceptable way. Since traditional comedy, then, like tragedy, is dominated by an idea, it has to deal with that idea in a continuous and logical fashion. For this reason the structure of comedy follows that of tragedy in the sense that it leads up to a point of climax and deals reasonably with the problem presented. Yet the climax of interest in a good comedy may find us

less concerned with the position or attitude of the principal character than with the nature of the situation itself. The screen scene in Sheridan's *School for Scandal* is a case in point. We are on edge with expectancy as to what will happen when Lady Teazle's hiding-place is discovered, as we are sure it will be, but we are untouched by curious interest as to the part her character will play after her exposure, until her character actually asserts itself. Furthermore, the theme of comedy is managed as a rule with less attention to the moral aspect of things and with less concentration of interest upon a single character; for as there are less grave developments involved, there is less occasion for either unity or emphasis of effect. Comedy, therefore, is on the whole less sharply focussed. It may present a number of characters with little real difference in importance; it may be given over largely to witty dialogue for its own sake; its action may have more spread, may even fall into digression and by-play; and its conclusion may not grow altogether logically out of the situation. *The School for Scandal*, again, shows all these tendencies.

Comedy in the hands of Shakespeare possesses less of the aim of truthful and literal comment upon life than in the hands of Sheridan or Molière. Shakespeare's comedies are kindly and happy fictions which take large liberties with actual life. The characters in such romantic comedies are human in the sense that we feel the reality of their poise and grace; but

they are so superior to fortune when they are in adversity, and so much the favorites of fortune in the end, that we recognize few similarities between their lot and the common lot of man. There is, moreover, in this type of play a complete indifference to ordinary probability. We may remember that both *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* are based upon plots in which there are quite unwarranted presumptions as to the effectiveness of disguise. In *Twelfth Night* it is impossible to tell Viola, disguised as a young man, from her twin brother; in *As You Like It*, Rosalind, masquerading as a boy, appears and talks to her lover daily in the most intimate fashion without ever being suspected of being herself. The settings, the society, and the atmosphere of these plays, have almost nothing in common with the facts of life. The term applied to these lighter and highly imaginative comedies of Shakespeare is "romantic comedy" — "romantic" because of their grace, their animation, their vivid characterization, their optimism, their indifference to prosaic realities; "comedies," because of their geniality and happy termination. They stand almost alone among their kind; for their effect is at once finer and less convincing than that of more realistic comedy.

An interesting transition from the older comedy of manners (Goldsmith's and Sheridan's, for example) to the "reflective" comedy of more recent years is the so-called "well-made play," a play in which

an elaborate and carefully designed plot develops a situation of high potential seriousness in an atmosphere of polite social relations, but without a consistently tragic accent and generally without tragic disaster for the principals. The well-made play in England (a generation later than the period of its greatest popularity in France) is illustrated in Sir Henry Arthur Jones's *The Liars* (1897) or Sir A. W. Pinero's *The Gay Lord Quex* (1899).

Modern tendencies. — We find it increasingly hard to classify the plays of recent years as either comic or tragic in trend. That exaggeration of mood and indifference to the logic of facts — as the ordinary person feels them — which characterizes both traditional comedy and traditional tragedy, has given way to more sincere and faithful representation of life. Such representations are still definitely concerned with the incongruities of things, but approach and treat them with neither undue gravity nor compromise. Galsworthy's *Loyalties*, Arnold Bennett's *Milestones*, Granville Barker's *The Madras House*, Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, belong to this class.

The change we have just noted from the old drama to the new is so fraught with significance for the point of view and the technique of the drama, and even for the most basic matters of dramatic instinct, that we would do well to illustrate it through a comparison of typical dramas of both sorts. What we shall find is a vivid contrast in all that goes to the making of a play, a contrast so sharp and persistent

as to indicate for the modern drama an almost wholly new critical philosophy. For this purpose we shall use Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as an example of classic tragedy, Ibsen's *Ghosts* as the turning-point from old to new, and Galsworthy's *Strife* as a drama of the modern naturalistic type.

Hamlet. — The initial situation in *Hamlet* is the recent death of Prince Hamlet's father, followed by his mother's marriage to his uncle, with general suspicion as to the means by which the old king met his death. This suspicion is confirmed by the rumored appearance of the ghost of the king upon the ramparts of the castle. So much we learn through the talk of Hamlet's friend, Horatio, with a couple of soldiers who are on guard upon the battlements of the castle, and who are brought into the play merely to help explain this situation. With one of those quick changes of scene which the Elizabethan stage, because of its simplicity of furnishing, could accomplish so readily, we are then introduced to the new king, Claudius, and the queen (Hamlet's mother), who try to argue away young Hamlet's grief for his father's death. But a score of hints throughout their discourse betray the dislike and suspicion which Claudius and Hamlet feel for each other. In the next scene Hamlet is informed of the appearance of the ghost, and now, his suspicions all alive, resolves to speak with it. The following scene introduces us to Ophelia, whom Hamlet has loved, and her brother, Laertes, whose jealousy for the honor of his family compels him to dissuade Ophelia from listening to Hamlet's suit, a part of the story which carries great importance later, when Ophelia's self-inflicted death furnishes

Laertes with a supposed reason for revenge. The remainder of the first act is taken up with Hamlet's actual meeting with the ghost, the confirmation of his suspicions, his resolution to avenge his father's murder upon the usurping king, and his swearing of the witnesses of his meeting with the ghost to solemn secrecy. This entire act, we see, has been consumed in telling us the ins and outs of the situation which provides Hamlet with a cause for action.

In the second act this action is set on foot. Here is the "middle," in Aristotle's phrase. Hamlet has sworn to the ghost that he will avenge the murder. But revenge is not a simple problem, and the longer Hamlet thinks over the facts, the more difficulties rise in his path. He fears the king's precautions and the court following, feels pity for his misled mother, and finally hesitates to act upon the ghost's revelations, for fear that they may have been the deceptions of a spirit from Hell bent upon his destruction. He appears before Ophelia with an apparently disordered mind, and so confirms the misgivings of Polonius, her father, who, like Laertes, will not encourage a suit that seems little likely to be to his daughter's honor. Polonius tells the king of Hamlet's condition, and the king, partly for his own protection, and partly to find how much Hamlet suspects or knows, has Hamlet spied upon to determine the nature and extent of his madness. Whether he was mad we do not know; nor is it apparent that Shakespeare wished us to know. Hamlet might have pretended madness for his own safety and to disarm the king's suspicions, or his mind might really have been overturned by the weight of his troubles. In any event, he sagaciously decides to test the truth of what the ghost had told him by ask-

ing a band of strolling players to enact a similar tragedy to that of the ghost's story, and observing its effect upon the conscience of the king. Throughout this act we see a purpose of action hindered by difficulties, and by uncertainty of mind upon Hamlet's part, but we feel that the problem is moving toward a solution.

In Act III Hamlet's play is given before the king and queen and their courtiers. The king, confronted with the spectacle of his base act, rises in confusion and leaves the room. Hamlet is convinced of his guilt, and spurred to instant vengeance. On his way to expostulate with his mother upon her baseness in marrying her husband's murderer, he finds the king upon his knees praying. This is his moment: but he reflects. If he kills the king in the very act of repentance, he will send him to heaven.

> "Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent:
> When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
> At game, a-swearing, or about some act
> That has no relish of salvation in't;
> Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
> And that his soul may be as damned and black
> As hell, whereto it goes."

But this is no mood for a man who has had to beg Fortune for his opportunity; and the futility of his decision is shown in the next instant, when the king rises with the admission that he cannot pray.

> "My words fly up; my thoughts remain below.
> Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

This is the crisis of the play. All Hamlet's acts and plans have led up to this critical moment; and when it arrives, he misses his chance. The next scene sees him

in his mother's chamber. She has summoned him to call him to account for his offence to the king in the giving of the play. But he takes justice into his own hands and proceeds to confront the queen with her shame. In fear of violence, she cries out, and is answered by Polonius, spying on the king's behalf, from behind the arras. Hamlet thrusts blindly, and kills him, then over his bleeding body wrings his mother's soul with the anguish of guilt. This closes the act; and it is not difficult to see that not only has Hamlet lost the one moment in which his father's death might have been avenged, but he has, in the death of Polonius, endangered his own safety. His fortunes are on the decline.

In Act IV we see the result. The king seizes upon Polonius' death as an excuse for sending Hamlet out of the country, with secret instructions that he be killed. Meanwhile Laertes, who has been in Paris, returns to court to know the reasons for his father's death and secret burial, and backed by a mob of supporters, challenges the very person of the king. To add to the difficulty of the king's situation, notice is brought of Hamlet's return to Denmark. But the king artfully stirs up Laertes' anger against Hamlet, and this is intensified when Laertes learns of Ophelia's madness and death, presumably as a result of her loss of Hamlet's love. The king conspires with Laertes that Hamlet shall be killed in a fencing-match in which Laertes' foil shall be poisoned; and to make more certain of the result, the cup from which Hamlet is to drink in the breathing-spaces of the duel is also to be poisoned. This Fourth Act, a short one, is taken up wholly with the king's marshalling of events to serve the purpose of ridding himself of Hamlet.

In the Fifth Act events move rapidly to the conclusion the king had planned. Hamlet, who, we learn, had discovered the king's directions for his death when he was sent abroad, had by a fortunate accident escaped that fate, and returned to achieve his delayed vengeance. He falls readily and unwittingly into the plan for the match with Laertes. The end is general death. In the confusion of the fencing match the queen dies by drinking from the poisoned cup, Hamlet and Laertes are both pricked with the poisoned sword, and when finally Hamlet learns from Laertes' dying words that the king had kindled Laertes' enmity against him, he turns upon the king and stabs him. Hamlet lives only long enough to bespeak the crown for the young soldier, Fortinbras, who is so perfect an example of the energy and rash courage which are lacking in Hamlet's own nature. The closing situation with its slaughter of all the principals, has grown quite naturally out of Hamlet's incapability for resolute action. His purpose is gained only at the moment when vengeance can mean nothing to him. Every delay, every deliberation has contributed to his failure.

The " classic " play. — Looking back, we will see that this play gives us a gradual and logical development of events, punctuated by moments of climax. These moments are, first, when Hamlet gains from the ghost the knowledge that his father had been murdered by King Claudius. This knowledge provides a motive for action and sets that action on foot (Aristotle's " beginning "). Following this is a progress of actions and circumstances which lead

up to the critical moment in Hamlet's destiny, the moment which will show his fitness or unfitness to cope with his problem. This is the crisis of the play, because it is the turning point in his fortunes. After this point, we feel that the action is directed to a tragic end, every incident and movement serving to bring that end nearer. The end, the "catastrophe" as it is called, is the sequel to every informing fact in Hamlet's character, and to the series of events over which he has lost control.

This is the classic pattern of play — often indicated graphically by the scheme of a rising line leading from the introduction to the climax, and a falling line from the climax to the catastrophe. This classic type of drama, always serious in aim, and always based on the principle that a man's act or neglect to act carries with it a consequence unfailingly logical, is seen in the work of the great tragic dramatists, Greek, English, French, and German, down to the nineteenth century.

The realistic play. — In the modern drama, however, there has been a movement away from the irrational idea that death, or even material disaster, is the natural result of mistaken action. It does not require much reflection to show us that the logic of the older type of play grows out of a more primitive social condition than ours today. Ordinarily such plays involve great figures in primitive passions, and end in violence. The serious drama of the present is normally concerned with those

plainer and less disputable consequences of error that are to be found in the common misunderstandings and pain of the world. This changed outlook is in part a result of the democratic tendencies in modern literature. A figure of tragic import does not need nowadays to be noble, wealthy, or even influential; and the representation of his feelings and actions is therefore not likely to be either rhetorical or over-dramatized.

The objections of the later realistic dramatists to the plays of the Greeks, the Elizabethans, and the classical dramatists of the continent might be framed somewhat in this wise. It is contended first of all that the movement of the older drama is too severe and too regular, that our acquaintance with ordinary life seldom, if ever, presents us with an urgent choice leading to a crisis in which an individual's destiny is settled beyond the possibility of recall. Wrapping up an individual's fate in the attitude or action of a critical moment places a value upon the mere circumstances of that moment which is belied in the bulk of human experience. For in any rational view, man lives beyond the hour of even his most critical acts; his character and his environment still furnish him with the materials for a life; his destiny is always newly presented to him, and the meaning of his life is the sum of all his acts and thoughts. It is also felt that in the older drama we encounter primitive and artificial tests of character. The Belgian dramatist Maeterlinck speaks of the feeling he experi-

ences at such a performance as that of " having spent an hour with his barbaric ancestors." If life is less violently disturbed in its movements under the social control of modern civilization, then the whole impressive scheme of the older plays suggests little as to life in its normal course under present conditions. Our realists ask more of what William Watson called " the flowing, flowing, flowing of the world," less of the clash of unchained emotions. Then again, the concentration of action upon a character of great individual importance is felt to misrepresent the meaning of life for an age in which the common man is a prime object of interest. And if the figures of the classic play are too imposing, so too is its sustained dignity of presentation, its magniloquence, and even the gravity of the moral lesson conveyed, since that lesson is usually so elemental that it lies at the very root of our social knowledge.

The modernist asks that the dramatist view the life of today in a reasonable and unpretentious way, taking from the typical lives of typical people the facts of social experience for whatever meaning they may carry to the individual, and clothing the action of a play in a phrase worthy of, but not superior to, the intelligence and station of the speakers. He believes in not raising his hero or his heroine far above their social fellows, for he holds that most significant happenings are felt in their effect upon the interests of groups rather than individuals. He accepts no rise and fall of action, for he believes that

life is not built in that precisely sequential fashion; he wants continuity instead of climax, and he is likely to approve concluding a play without finally disposing of the characters, since he argues that when an episode and its immediate consequences are finished, the characters, no matter through what fires they have passed, are likely to take up life again where it had previously left off. A play, to him, should cover just the sort and extent of action that any noteworthy incident might in the life of any person.

To carry out the intent of this criticism the dramatists of the last half century have developed a technique wholly different from that of their predecessors. Their workmanship has as its aim only reality of effect, as far as this can be secured within the limitations of stage conditions.

Ghosts. — The name of greatest historical importance in this connection is that of Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian dramatist, who after his earlier years of more or less conventional play-writing, and his middle years of independent social outlook and gradually strengthening technique, brought out his *Ghosts* in 1881. *Ghosts* falls far short of the realization of all the reconstructive ideas we have noted, but it reaches definitely toward those ideas.

Ghosts has only one simple stage set, and introduces only five characters. The first act presents the shiftless carpenter, Engstrand, and his daughter Regina, maid in Mrs. Alving's household. The opening dialogue reveals

Regina and Engstrand as pursuing their affairs with an astute regard for their own advantage, and throws out some cautious hints as to the questionable character of Regina's dead mother. As Engstrand leaves, Pastor Manders enters, and Regina leaves, to return with Mrs. Alving. The characters and views of Manders and Mrs. Alving are developed almost from their first words together, and we are given even a glimpse of the fact that at one time there had been some tenderness between them. The note of their opposed views is conveyed in a few lines of dialogue which follow Pastor Manders' discovery of certain books on Mrs. Alving's table.

Manders: Do you read this sort of literature?

Mrs. Alving: Certainly I do.

Manders: Do you feel better or happier for such reading?

Mrs. Alving: I feel, so to speak, more secure.

Manders: That is strange. How do you mean?

Mrs. Alving: Well, I seem to find explanation and confirmation of all sorts of things I myself have been thinking. For that is the wonderful part of it, Pastor Manders — there is really nothing new in these books, nothing but what most people think and believe. Only most people either don't formulate it for themselves, or else keep quiet about it.

Manders: Great Heavens! Do you really believe that most people —?

Mrs. Alving: I do indeed.

Manders: But surely not in this country? Not here among us?

Mrs. Alving: Yes, certainly; here as elsewhere.

Manders: Well, I really must say —!

Mrs. Alving: For the rest, what do you object to in these books?

Manders: Object to them? You surely do not suppose that I have nothing better to do than to study such publications as these?

Mrs. Alving: That is to say, you know nothing of what you are condemning?

Manders: I have read enough *about* these writings to disapprove of them.

Mrs. Alving: Yes, but your own judgment —

Manders: My dear Mrs. Alving, there are many occasions in life when one must rely upon others. Things are so ordered in this world; and it is well that they are. Otherwise, what would become of society? *

As their talk develops, Manders reveals himself more and more as a formal-minded man, fearful of opinion, committed to lip-service, though not apparently a hypocrite. Mrs. Alving's character is still problematical, but we see behind the surface of her convictions some shadow of a profound experience that has made her think for herself.

The business of Pastor Manders' visit is now brought to light. He has come to dedicate the Orphanage that Mrs. Alving has erected to her husband's memory, and to ask her instructions as to the last business transactions connected with it. As these are concluded, Oswald, Mrs. Alving's son, comes in. He is a vital and temperamental young artist, but in his talk and his manner there lurks a secret fear which at moments comes almost to the surface. He has just returned from the artists' colony at Paris. In the course of talk among the three we discover that Pastor Manders questions the wisdom of Oswald's

* This and the following quotations from *Ghosts* are from William Archer's translation, by permission of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons.

sojourn away from home; and Oswald's placid exposition of the "freedom" of that environment does not relieve his mind in the least. We see Mrs. Alving, however, silently interested in the ideas the two men are discussing. Oswald contrasts with the social concealment and hypocrisy of the society Manders defends, the seriously accepted freedom of the life in which he himself has recently been moving.

As Oswald leaves, after having said his say, Pastor Manders begins to take Mrs. Alving seriously to task. He recalls to Mrs. Alving's memory the fact that a year after her marriage she had left her husband and had fled to him for protection, and that he had induced her to return to her duty and resume her life with her husband. As she had been derelict to her duty, then, he says, so she had been later when she sent her son away from home to be educated. He reminds her that after he himself had recalled her to her duties as a wife, her life had turned out serenely and happily, and the husband from whom she had fled had changed his ways and become a model for the community. But it is too late, Manders thinks, to repair the harm done in removing Oswald from the good influences of his parents' home. Stung by these reproaches, Mrs. Alving then tells Manders the actual facts of her life with her husband, that he "had died just as dissolute as he had lived all his days." She shows him how her sending Oswald away from home broke her own heart, but saved her son from the pollution of contact with his father. Manders is naturally greatly shocked. Mrs. Alving tells Manders in detail the story of her husband's shame, the climax of which was an episode within her own home:

Mrs. Alving: I had gone on bearing with him, although I knew very well the secrets of his life out of doors. But when he brought the scandal within our own walls —

Manders: Impossible! Here?

Mrs. Alving: Yes: here in our own home. It was there (*Pointing towards the first door on the right*), in the dining-room, that I first came to know of it. I was busy with something in there, and the door was standing ajar. I heard our housemaid come up from the garden, with water for some flowers.

Manders: Well —?

Mrs. Alving: Soon after I heard Alving come in too. I heard him say something softly to her. And then I heard — (*With a short laugh*) — oh! it still sounds in my ears, so hateful and yet so ludicrous — I heard my own servant-maid whisper, "Let me go, Mr. Alving! Let me be!"

Manders: What unseemly levity on his part! But it cannot have been more than levity, Mrs. Alving; believe me, it cannot.

Mrs. Alving: I soon knew what to believe. Mr. Alving had his way with the girl; and that connection had consequences, Mr. Manders.

At the end of her narrative Manders exclaims, "And it is to this man that you raise a memorial?" Mrs. Alving then explains her motive in founding the memorial to her husband. It was to free herself from every penny that had come to her through her marriage with Alving. "It was my purchase-money," she tells Manders. As she says this, her son reënters the room. He has not gone for the walk for which he had left, for the day is gloomy. In a minute he leaves for the dining-room to open some wine, and Mrs. Alving puts the last word to her story — that with the dedication of the Orphanage she will have

parted from the last memory of her husband, and that hereafter she will "act in every way as though he who is dead had never lived in this house." Then "from the dining-room comes the noise of a chair overturned, and at the same moment is heard":

Regina (*sharply, but in a whisper*): Oswald! Take care! Are you mad? Let me go!

Mrs. Alving (*starts in terror*): Ah —! . . .

Manders (*agitated*): What can be the matter? What is it, Mrs. Alving?

Mrs. Alving (*hoarsely*): Ghosts! The couple from the conservatory — risen again!

Manders: Is it possible? Regina? — Is she —?

Mrs. Alving: Yes. Come. Not a word —!

Comparing this first act with that of *Hamlet*, we must be struck with the fact that antecedent events are revealed largely by natural conversation on the part of the principals. We see also that the orientation of the characters is perfectly clear, and even at this early stage in the action practically complete. The situation itself, however, is as yet undeveloped; we have no intimation so far as to what the characters of the play will do with the problem; and we shall see as we follow the play that the problem itself has only been touched upon the surface at this point. The idea of the play — intimated in the title — has been struck — that the ghosts of old events walk in later life, and we have some sense of Ibsen's purpose that the play shall be one of character as well as of action, and of ideas as well as character.

In the second act of *Ghosts* Mrs. Alving and Manders reënter the room after dinner, embarrassed and distressed. They are discussing plans for preventing mischief between Oswald and Regina. Pastor Manders believes the girl should return to her father — but then Engstrand is not her father. Manders recollects suddenly that Regina is the offspring of the liaison between Captain Alving and Mrs. Alving's maid. Manders is particularly disgusted because he has learned that Engstrand accepted money to take the paternity of Regina upon himself, for Engstrand has been one of his favored penitents. "Just think of it," he says, "for a miserable three hundred dollars, to go and marry a fallen woman." Mrs. Alving answers, "Then what have you to say of me? I went and married a fallen man." Manders refuses to recognize the connection of the two cases, but Mrs. Alving insists that she should have been true to herself and frank with society by refusing to conceal and condone her husband's vices. Manders asks:

> You call it cowardice to do your plain duty? Have you forgotten that a son ought to love and honor his father and mother?
>
> *Mrs. Alving:* Don't let us talk in such general terms. Let us ask, Ought Oswald to love and honor Chamberlain Alving?
>
> *Manders:* Is there no voice in your mother's heart that forbids you to destroy your son's ideals?
>
> *Mrs. Alving:* But what about the truth?
>
> *Manders:* But what about the ideals?

Here the central conception of the play is expanded when Mrs. Alving applies the term "Ghosts" to all sorts of dead ideas and beliefs, a point of view reiterated through-

out the play as an accompaniment to and gloss upon the action. Again the two advert to their old attachment — a pitiful ghost of sentiment. Returning to their discussion — how to dispose of Regina — they are interrupted by Engstrand. Manders takes him seriously to task for his acceptance of money for assuming the blame of Captain Alving's escapade, but Engstrand cleverly diverts suspicion from himself by asserting that he married Regina's mother to save her from disgrace. Mrs. Alving is of course quite conscious that Manders' credulous nature makes him wax in Engstrand's hands. As amends for what he thinks his unjust suspicions, Manders agrees to lend his support to Engstrand's plan for a sailor's home — an avowed philanthropy, but probably a very questionable enterprise. Then Manders picks up his belongings and leaves. Oswald comes into the room upon Manders' departure. He is depressed, unable to work at his painting. Sitting down beside his mother, he tells her gravely that he must tell her something; and he unfolds to her the fact that his mind had been broken down while he was in Paris, and he will never be able to work again. What stings him most is the diagnosis of the doctor whom he had consulted.

Oswald: At last he said: "There has been something worm-eaten in you from your birth." He used that very word — *vermoulu.*

Mrs. Alving (*breathlessly*): What did he mean by that?

Oswald: I didn't understand either, and begged him to explain himself more clearly. And then the old cynic said — (*clenching his fist*) Oh —!

Mrs. Alving: What did he say?

Oswald: He said "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children."

But Oswald has not accepted that judgment, and does not now; for Mrs. Alving's policy of concealment has built up an ideal portrait of his father in his imagination. The mother tries to comfort and reassure him; but Oswald has too vivid a sense of the doctor's pronouncement, and asks her not to talk about it. His first recourse, in order to forget, is champagne. Then he begins to talk with his mother about Regina. "Isn't she splendid?" But Mrs. Alving tries to divert this interest, telling him she will devote her life to the care of him. Oswald tells her that if this illness were all, he would stay with her contentedly, but he cannot endure the dread that gnaws at him. When Mrs. Alving tries to pursue this idea he again declines to talk. Again he returns to the topic of Regina. He tells his mother "It flashed upon me that in her lay my salvation; for I saw that she was full of the joy of life." Mrs. Alving is struck with the phrase; but her duty confronts her, and bidding Regina to sit down with them, she starts to tell them the truth of their relationship when she is interrupted first by the entrance of Manders, and immediately after by the cry that the Orphanage is on fire.

This second act is important less for advancing the action of the play, which is really almost static, than it is for clarifying and illustrating the central idea. The action is furthered only to the extent of revealing to Mrs. Alving this closing, but wholly unexpected result of her husband's vicious life. The principals in this act are Mrs. Alving and Manders; for as poignant as Oswald's situation is, we know that the terror of the tragedy is really settling on

Mrs. Alving, and the meaning of the approaching horror is clear only to her.

The third and last act gives us the aftermath of the fire, which has completely destroyed the Orphanage. Engstrand has clinched his hold upon Manders by first inducing him to think that Manders' own carelessness had caused the fire, and then offering to accept the blame of it himself. For this Manders puts the last touch to the picture of his character by thanking him and promising him part of the endowment of the Orphanage as a start on his sailors' home. It is an unnecessary and theatrical touch; but with this the two leave the scene, and the play proceeds with Mrs. Alving, Oswald, and Regina. Mrs. Alving takes up her talk with Regina and Oswald where it had been broken off by the alarm of fire. In few words she tells Oswald the truth about his father, and tells Regina that she also is the child of Chamberlain Alving. In the course of this communication she reverts to Oswald's phrase "the joy of life," seeing now, and clearly, that the faults of Alving's character had been due largely to the fact that his expansive and joy-loving nature had been cramped "in a half-grown town, which had no joys to offer him — only dissipations. He had no object in life — only an official position. He had no work into which he could throw himself heart and soul; he had only business. He had not a single comrade who could realize what the joy of life meant — only loungers and boon-companions." And she takes to herself the blame for not seeing this situation in its proper light, but holding him strictly to account for his "duties" to her. Regina is not of the temper to stay to nurse an invalid. After hearing Mrs.

Alving's story, she recklessly throws up her position in the household, and departs after Manders and Engstrand to see what fortune will bring her. Left alone with his mother, Oswald reviews querulously what his mother has told him. The tragedy of his mother's and father's lives has affected him little; for like his mother, he is a realist, and measures affection not by traditional ties, but by his actual nearness to people. Still there hangs over his life the dread of which he has spoken before. Regina could have relieved him of it; can his mother? He exacts from her a promise to do what he shall ask her, and then slowly tells her that the malady of his mind, he has been told, will return.

Oswald: Yes, it's so indescribably loathsome, you know. Oh, if it had only been an ordinary mortal disease — ! For I'm not so afraid of death — though I should like to live as long as I can.

Mrs. Alving: Yes, yes Oswald; you must!

Oswald: But this is so unutterably loathsome. To become a little baby again! To have to be fed! To have to — Oh, it's not to be spoken of!

Mrs. Alving: The child has his mother to nurse him.

Oswald (*springs up*): No, never that! That is just what I will not have. I can't endure to think that perhaps I should lie in that state for many years, and get old and grey. And in the meantime you might die and leave me. (*Sits in Mrs. Alving's chair.*) For the doctor said it wouldn't necessarily prove fatal at once. He called it a sort of softening of the brain — or something like that. (*Smiles sadly.*) I think that expression sounds so nice. It always sets me thinking of cherry-colored velvet — something soft and delicate to stroke.

Mrs. Alving (*shrieks*): Oswald!

Oswald (*springs up and paces the room*): And now you have taken Regina from me. If I could only have had her. She would have come to the rescue, I know.

Again Mrs. Alving tells him that she would give him any help in the world. Then Oswald takes from his pocket a small box of morphine tablets which he has carefully gathered. This is the rescue that he has spoken of. Since Regina has gone, his mother must save him from that long life of helpless imbecility.

Oswald: Who shall do it, if not you?
Mrs. Alving: I! Your Mother!
Oswald: For that very reason!
Mrs. Alving: I, who gave you life!
Oswald: I have never asked you for life. And what sort of life have you given me? I will not have it! You shall take it back again.

Mrs. Alving is terror-stricken, but she is overwhelmed by the agony of Oswald's plight. Finally she says, "Here is my hand upon it." Inwardly she hopes that the occasion will never come to redeem the promise. But scarcely has she risen to put the lamp out as the sunrise begins to flood the room, when Oswald shrinks down in his chair, calling on her to give him the sun. For a moment she turns to question what she has heard. Then —

Mrs. Alving (*springs up in despair, entwines her hands in her hair and shrieks*): I cannot bear it! (*Whispers as though petrified.*) I cannot bear it! Never! (*Suddenly.*) Where has he got them? (*Fumbles hastily in his breast.*) Here! (*Shrinks back a few steps and screams.*) No; no; No! — Yes! — No; no! (*She stands a few steps away from him*

with her hands twisted in her hair, and stares at him in speechless horror.)

Oswald (*sits motionless as before, and says*): The sun — the sun.

Here the final curtain falls.

It is clear that the incidents of this last act prolong the suspense of the preceding two, and bring us to a climax of dramatic interest in almost the closing sentences of the play. The conclusion of the play is, too, only a particularly vivid final moment in the presentation of the problem, and not really a conclusion at all. Does Mrs. Alving fulfill her promise, or not? Either solution if actually presented, would spoil the effect of this closing situation.

Looking at the play as a whole, we have an action that is definitely, even strikingly unified, centering curiously in the life of a person whom we do not see upon the stage. As far as the characters actually appearing in the play are concerned, the action may seem dispersed and unfocussed. There are three distinct threads of narrative interest — the story of Captain Alving, Oswald's tragedy, and the dead romance of Manders and Mrs. Alving; but the real plot of the drama is the whole stretch of Mrs. Alving's experience, both domestic and intellectual; and the events of the play are only the last passages in this experience. What is new and creative in *Ghosts* is first of all its subject — a frank, critical, and uncompromising social study, not completely dispassionate, and possibly not completely fair, but certainly sin-

cere. The situation is contrived, scarcely typical, but it carries the marks of the author's convictions. Technically the play illustrates the modern tendencies. Character is a matter of supreme interest, and action constantly throws light on character. The dialogue is still " dramatic " dialogue, incisive and epigrammatic, but it approaches natural dialogue in its greater freedom from rhetoric, its deliberateness, and at times its casualness. But the mood of the play is still tragic, in the older sense, and its handling is still theatrical. The repetition of the " Ghosts " episode, the interruptions of important communications by the entrance of a third character for purposes of suspense, and the working up of careful " curtains " are all echoes of conventional art. Yet the balance of effect is clearly on the side of natural, rational, and impartial treatment. In these respects *Ghosts* may be taken (not even excepting its predecessor, *A Doll's House*) as the first clearly realized and firmly executed play in the modern tradition.

Strife. — *Strife*, written by John Galsworthy in 1909, is quite differently conceived and quite differently made. It is an example (not an absolutely typical one) of the naturalistic technique, which aims at the unexaggerated representation of the normal movement of life in actual situations. It introduces thirty characters; the time of action is only six hours. The play has three acts, with two scenes in the second, and all the stage sets are differ-

ent. Except in point of elapsed time, then, it does not show the compression and economy of *Ghosts*. Nor does it show the tight plot structure of *Ghosts*. In the latter we have a progressive building up of facts in a carefully integrated plot. The development is continuously causative — the present step taking its reason or occasion from the last, and leading into the next. In *Strife* the situation is clear from the outset, and the movement of the play is merely the filling in of the details of a picture that is fairly distinct for us in the first two hundred lines of dialogue. The dialogue itself is scattered amongst the very numerous characters, is often inconsequential, and even occasionally digressive. Most importantly, the pressure of the individual problem, which we find so marked in *Hamlet* and *Ghosts*, is scarcely felt in *Strife*. Where, therefore, the force of the action lies so definitely in a mass of detail that illustrates a general situation, the structural outlines of the play, when it is analyzed, will be found to be strikingly simple.

The first act of *Strife* opens with a gathering of the directors of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works. Before the meeting is called, there is random talk amongst the directors which gives us some idea of the drift of events before the action opens. There is little or no direct exposition, for little is really needed. We know there is a strike, and that this strike, though already of some duration, is still a deadlock. We discover, too, that the strikers are in a doubly difficult situation, since their

union has refused to support their action and will not now stand behind them. There is an interesting and rapid differentiation of character as among the members of the board, but we have the impression, gathered from a very few introductory sentences, that as a group they are more useful to themselves than to society, and are equipped with most of the characteristic prejudices of their class and position. These facts come to us in subtle suggestions of their querulous concern for their creature comforts while they are leaving their workmen's fates to the tragic decision of hunger and cold; and in their all but unanimous refusal to open an eye to the human claims in their employees' position. There are three exceptions — one, Anthony, the chairman of the board, a hard, unsentimental, and unpampered realist, who sees the whole situation as a fight without quarter, a conflict of personalities, not issues; the other two are his son Edgar, and Underwood, his son-in-law and manager of the works, both of whom have an enlightened sense of the situation, and are willing to meet the hands upon fair terms of discussion. Anthony has the weight of a dominating personality in the preliminary business of the board. His single principle of negotiation is "no compromise." After preliminary formalities the board meets first the agent of the union; then a delegation of employees, headed by one David Roberts, a stern, iron-minded skilled mechanic with a well justified grudge against his employers, who have made thousands of pounds out of his inventive gift and have given him a pittance as a reward. Roberts' inflexibility is the match of Anthony's; he is provocative and contentious both with the board and with his fellow delegates. Roberts argues the justice of their claims, summing up —

There's not one sentence of writing on that paper [the statement of their terms] that we can do without. Not one single sentence. All those demands are fair. We have not asked anything that we are not entitled to ask. . . . There is not anything on that piece of paper that a just man should not ask, or a just man give.*

To this Anthony answers: "There is not one single demand on this paper that we will grant." This collision is significant of the spirit of leadership on both sides. Plainly neither Anthony nor Roberts voices the better sense of his associates. After a few futile advances the conference adjourns without results. When the workmen have left, there is murmuring among the other members of the board, who feel anxiety for their dividends. As the group leave the room for luncheon, Enid, Anthony's daughter and wife of Underwood, the manager, attempts persuasion with her father. Of course he is adamant with her, as with his associates.

Enid: You don't know the state the men are in.

Anthony: I know it well enough.

Enid: You don't, Father; if you did, you wouldn't —

Anthony: It's you who don't know the simple facts of the position. What sort of mercy do you suppose you'd get if no one stood between you and the continual demands of labor? This sort of mercy. (*He puts his hand up to his throat and squeezes it.*) First would go your sentiments, my dear; then your culture; and your comforts would be going all the time!

Enid: I don't believe in barriers between classes.

Anthony: You — don't — believe — in — barriers between the classes?

* The quotations from John Galsworthy's *Strife* are printed by permission of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons.

Enid (*coldly*): And I don't know what that has to do with this question.

Anthony: It will take a generation or two for you to understand.

Enid: It's only you and Roberts, Father, and you know it. (*Anthony thrusts out his lower lip.*)

Anthony still adheres rigidly to his position, as the act closes, in spite of all pressure brought to bear upon him, and in spite, too, of the fact that his aging body is not equal to the tax which his indomitable spirit would put upon it.

We can see at a glance that the structure of this first act is widely different from that of *Ghosts*. There is a patent avoidance of complicated situation and of a problem of sharply individual bearing. Exposition is devoted to the clarification of the general situation, in which developments can move only in obvious grooves. Characterization is clear, but only as far as the requirements of the plot are concerned, and in this sense the characters, while far from being mere "types," are still plainly representative of certain typical mental reactions to the labor question. The dialogue is less packed with special significance, and is as free from "effects" as stage dialogue can well be. The movement is fluent and not artificially stimulated.

The scene of the second act is the interior of Roberts' cottage — with a gathering of women whose conversation reveals the desperate poverty of their families. Mrs. Roberts is the central figure — sickly, resigned, and con-

vinced of the right of her husband's position. All the neighbors but one have left, when Enid Underwood enters on a visit to Mrs. Roberts, partly out of sympathy, and partly for intercession. They discuss the merits of the situation in a feminine way, and from the feminine point of view, but there is evident on both sides deep-rooted prepossessions and "defensive" philosophies. In Enid's talk, in spite of her good intentions, there is the determined note of social superiority and spoiled tastes, and a faintly concealed anxiety for her father. In Mrs. Roberts we see the dumb resistance of a hard-driven woman. Roberts enters and Enid begins to plead with him, but he frankly and rudely repulses her, laying the blame for the situation on her father's obstinacy.

> *Roberts:* Does Mr. Anthony think it brave to fight against women and children? Mr. Anthony is a rich man, I believe; does he think it brave to fight against those who haven't a penny? Does he think it brave to set children crying with hunger, an' women shivering with cold?
>
> *Enid* (*putting up her hand as though warding off a blow*): My father is acting on his principles, and you know it!
>
> *Roberts:* And so am I.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *Enid:* I make one more appeal to you, Mr. Roberts, for the sake of your wife.
>
> *Roberts* (*with polite malice*): If I might advise ye, Ma'am — make it for the sake of your husband and your father.

Enid soon departs; Roberts talks with his wife, whose resolution is all but broken, and then goes out. There is a rapid shifting of characters who drift in and out of the house, and scraps of speech that hint that the men are giving in and will withdraw their support from Roberts.

This is the last straw. As the curtain falls Mrs. Roberts is seen to be in a state of collapse.

A second scene in this second act gives us a meeting of the men in the open. Harness, the union agent, is urging them to come to terms that can be considered, and sentiment is obviously inclining his way. After him several strikers speak, for and against measures of compromise, with sincerity and energy, but also with the limitations of untaught men. Roberts finally ascends the platform, and puts his views before them with tremendous emotional intensity. At the moment of his apparent triumph, however, a neighbor's daughter comes up to the platform to tell him, "Your wife's dying." Roberts tries to go on, but soon descends and leaves. His wife is already dead. Madge Thomas, who has brought the message, turns on the crowd: "You pack of hounds! How many more women are you going to let to die?" The tide of feeling turns. As the meeting breaks up it is plain that Roberts has lost.

In the third and concluding act, Enid and Edgar are discovered talking over the prospect. Enid's limited sympathy has been frozen out of her by Mrs. Roberts' resistance and Roberts' rudeness. Edgar, whose sympathies are honestly on the side of the men, fears the effect upon Anthony of a defeat through the refusal of the board to support his position; and it is now clear that what hunger has done for the men, the prospect of having to stop dividends will do for the board — force them to compromise. Enid pleads with Edgar to avert their father's humiliation:

Enid: If he won't give way, and he's beaten, it will simply break him down!

Edgar: Didn't you say it was dreadful going on with the men in this state?

Enid: But can't you see, Ted? Father'll never get over it! You must stop them somehow. The others are afraid of him. If you back him up —

Edgar (*putting his hand to his head*): Against my convictions — against yours! The moment it begins to pinch one personally —

Enid: It isn't personal. It's the Dad!

Edgar: Your family or yourself, and over goes the show!

As her father passes through the room to attend the meeting, Enid tries to dissuade him from going in and taking a defeat. But he is unbending. The meeting goes forward behind closed doors. Two episodes follow in quick succession — Enid's talk with her father's valet, which visualizes the struggle clearly as a bitter-end fight between Anthony and Roberts, and Madge Thomas's entry to inform Enid, with trenchant bitterness and accusation, of the death of Mrs. Roberts. As Madge goes, the doors of the meeting-room open to expose the beginnings of Anthony's defeat. The directors enter in spirited argument. Financial consequences, pity for the sufferers, personal convenience, all help in forcing them to a conclusion. Discussion becomes high, Edgar standing out vigorously for the human claims in the case. A vote is forced, and after a characteristic and spirited speech by Anthony (the companion-piece to Roberts' in the closing passage of Act 3) he accepts the changed situation and resigns. The men's committee file in with their terms. There is one last challenge from Roberts, which fails as Anthony's resistance did. Terms are settled and signed. Anthony and Roberts stand for a moment in respectful admiration of each

other's fight, though both have lost. The last lines are spoken by the secretary of the board to the union agent:

> *Tench:* D'you know, Sir — these terms; they're the *very same* we drew up together, you and I, and put to both sides before the fight began! All this — all this — and — for what?
>
> *Harness* (*in a slow, grim voice*): That's where the fun comes in.

The naturalistic play. — What strikes one first in a comparison of *Ghosts* and *Strife* is the clearer sense of social truth in the latter, and the presentation of an issue that is not manufactured, for the purposes of a presentment that is not one-sided. The situation is a cross-section of life in a very definite sense. The matter of the play is the whole psychology of class — not merely the immediate problem; and for this reason the conclusion of the play (which we see to be a mere economic expedient) pretends to offer no easy answer to the greater problem raised. There is no groundless optimism and no groundless pessimism. The tone of the conclusion is both grave and humorous. The dramatic quality of the play as a whole lies in the representative nature of the action, and in the moral truth of the scenes and characters depicted.

The central matter — class psychology — we see built up in a quite typical situation through careful delineation of character. Yet the characterization is often sketchy, never exhaustive, never more than sufficient to illustrate the theme with some breadth.

Its greatest force lies in its subtle delineation of social pressures — tastes, suspicions, and antipathies — that work upon class-consciousness as both cause and effect, and that create in individuals barriers to tolerance and understanding. Exposition is in the main sparing and undetailed; the preliminary exposition allusive rather than explicit. The dialogue is not too compressed, and not too persistently focussed upon either the central idea or the characters of the principals.

There is one quality in *Strife*, however, which tends to detract from its naturalistic effect. This is a conspicuous symmetry in the grouping of characters. Mr. Galsworthy shows a penchant for symmetry. We find it even more marked in his novels *Fraternity* and *The Dark Flower*, and in his play *The Silver Box*. In *Strife* we discover it in the balancing of Anthony against Roberts, of the directors against the workingmen's committee, of Enid Underwood against Madge Thomas, and generally in the perfect regularity with which dramatic interest develops through a sequence of contrasting scenes. It is a purely speculative question whether this has superior stage value. At any rate it is worth noting that in Hauptmann's *Weavers*, a play of similar subject and point of view, there is almost no trace of it.

What is a good play? — Our discussion of the drama has attempted to embrace the entire range of dramatic practice through centuries of changing aims and shifting emphasis. What we have said

seems to have clear application to the tragedy of the ancients, the more modern " classics " — Shakespeare, Corneille, and Goethe — to comedies of wit and of manners like Molière's and Sheridan's, to romantic comedies and comedies of situation like Shakespeare's, to the well-made play of the French, and to the social dramas of Ibsen. In spite of this apparent uniformity of dramatic intention, however, we have discerned a more or less clearly marked drift away from what we might call the drama of poetry and of fixed moral values, and toward a drama of realities. And the course of this drift has been marked by an accentuation of interest in effective and truthful characterization. Even in the modern " drama of ideas " — in the hands of Bernard Shaw and Eugene Brieux — the interest attaches definitely to character. Yet we find side by side with a drama of realistic intentions the purely romantic plays of Rostand and Dunsany, and the earlier plays of Maeterlinck, like *Pelléas* and *Mélisande*, with the strong appeal of the mystical and deep atmospheric suggestion. In J. M. Barrie's plays we find often little more than a great delicacy of characterization and a charming lightness of dialogue — as for example in his *Rosalind*. Here even the struggle which we have been taught to feel is the solid basis of dramatic interest, seems all but wholly absent. Indeed Mr. Barrie is so superbly indifferent to the canons of dramatic art that a recent writer's book on the contemporary drama does not even

mention him by name, yet next to Mr. Shaw he would seem to be the most esteemed English playwright of the last twenty years. Certainly struggle has become in much smaller degree than formerly the determinant of dramatic quality. A play may justify itself by mere brightness of mood — as does Dunsany's *Lost Silk Hat;* by pertinent discussion of significant social questions, like Mr. Shaw's *Getting Married;* by witty dialogue, like Wilde's *Importance of Being Earnest.* In all of these there is an obvious indifference to the old formulas; yet theatre-goers approve them. At any rate we are becoming better acquainted with a drama in which social attitudes to a large extent take the place of an action which is controlled by moral formulas, and in this drama the truth of the social evidence is valued above the neat articulation of theatrically serviceable events. Probably if we look at the question sensibly, and free ourselves from *à priori* definitions, we can concede that in the drama, as in any form of art, historical criticism cannot actually control creative effort. Admitting all the possible errors of popular judgment and the vagaries of fashionable taste, we still confront the fact that a playwright who can reach and hold a normally intelligent and ordinarily critical audience in a theatre must be something of a master of dramatic craft.

The play and the stage. — One matter of importance in the study of the drama we have not considered at all — the relation of the expedients,

devices, and mechanical accessories of the stage to effective production. No study of the contemporary stage can fail to consider scenery, properties, costuming, lighting, stage design, and stage mechanics, as an integral and closely studied branch of production. But these are laboratory matters, and the only place in which they can be discussed practically is behind the scenes of a thoroughly modern theatre. It is well to remember in this connection, however, that the literary basis of dramatic art may not be as greatly affected by the technical side of stage art as we might at first suppose. Ideally a perfect production of *Hamlet* for modern theatre-goers might be the most finished that the modern manager could stage. Yet when one has seen within the last generation productions of *Hamlet* of the lavish pictorial type, with symbolic settings, with the male title rôle played by an accomplished actress, with completely modern costuming (dress-suits and golfies), with an unfurnished stage, with its lines read sometimes as poetry, and sometimes as prose, he is pretty likely to conclude that the essential qualities of a thoroughly good acting drama reside in the conception and handling of the drama itself, and that all the problems of presentation and interpretation are secondary to its actual composition.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Richard Burton's *How to See a Play* (Macmillan, 1914) is a readable and suggestive study of the drama in both its literary

and its theatrical relations. Discussion centers largely upon plays produced within the last generation.

For historical treatment of the traditionary dramatic forms see Brander Matthews' *The Development of the Drama* (Scribner, 1904), and William Archer's *The Old Drama and the New* (Small, Maynard, 1923). Barrett H. Clark's *European Theories of the Drama* (Cincinnati, Stewart and Kidd, 1918) is a source-book of critical theory from Aristotle to Bernard Shaw.

For wider study of the drama of today consult Thomas Dickinson's *An Outline of Contemporary Drama* (Houghton Mifflin, 1927), a book designed for use primarily with the same author's important anthologies of contemporary plays. Barrett H. Clark's *A Study of the Modern Drama* (Appleton, 1925) discusses playwriting from Ibsen to the present, largely by analysis and criticism of one play each from a number of important contemporary playwrights. This volume also contains useful bibliographies of books upon the drama and the theatre and of collections of contemporary plays. Ludwig Lewisohn's *The Modern Drama* (Huebsch, 1915) and Charlton Andrews' *The Drama of Today* (Lippincott, 1913) are valuable, but more or less superseded by later books upon the subject.

Hiram K. Moderwell's *The Theatre of Today* (Lane, 1914) treats the mechanics and art of modern play production. While it is not new enough to cover the latest in stage-design and decoration, it is still a generally satisfactory discussion of the mechanical side of play production.

Valuable treatments of the technique of play-writing will be found in George Pierce Baker's *Dramatic Technique* (Houghton Mifflin, 1919) and William Archer's *Play Making* (Small, Maynard, 1912).

POETRY

There is a game played in the psychological laboratory that consists in calling out a word, and noting the image that appears before the eyes of the subject before the reason has had time to work. There can be little doubt that if the word called were "poetry," nine out of ten people would see a printed page with a neat column of verse running down its center, set up in perfectly straight alignment on the left hand, and curiously wobbly on the right. Now poetry existed long before writing; so it would be interesting to know what would appear before the eyes of one of our remoter ancestors if he were submitted to the same test. Probably his visual reaction would be to call up the picture of a gifted and privileged bard, sitting in a place of distinction at a tribal feast, chanting or reciting a tale of the feats of his clansmen, or of their outstanding hero, from a memory literally packed with thousands or even tens of thousands, of memorized verses. The difference suggests a fact — that the very nature of the appeal of poetry has changed with the ages. Originally it was meant to be heard, and its outstanding features had therefore to be simple and marked. The ancient bard's appeal must be clear and immediate, for his only opportunity to convey his idea was in the in-

stant passing of a phrase. Today poetry is printed, and therefore embraces beauties and subtleties that may be — that are meant to be — dwelt upon affectionately and reflectively. Poetry as we know it is therefore capable of greater distinction; its range is greater; so it requires more training and more susceptibility to impressions to embrace all its possibilities. The difference in character between the best simple poetical effect in poetry and the most "finished" artistic effect is explained by centuries of accumulated culture. There is therefore no domain of literary inquiry in which careful study offers more to the interested mind.

Appeal to the ear. — We have said that the appeal of poetry was at first wholly to the ear. That is still elementally true, for the only characteristic common to all poetry is rhythm, or beat. Poetry may dispense with rime, with refined or elevated phraseology, with any of the numerous ornaments often associated with it, but not with rhythm.

Rhythm. — Rhythm, or the regularly recurring impact of sound, is present to our consciousness even though it is not heard with our ears, so that a simple piece of poetry, when its accent is strongly marked, seems to be read to the accompaniment of a pounding on the table or a tapping of the foot somewhere in the back of the mind. We feel that effect in Kipling's *Gunga Din* or Vachel Lindsay's *Congo*. It is worth noting in this connection the literal meaning of our word "foot;" for the Greek and Latin words

for the unit of rhythm are exactly the same. The term has descended from that obscure period in which singing and dancing were in practice all but inseparable; and the accented syllable was the syllable pronounced when the foot went down. Even now, when we rarely read poetry aloud as we read to ourselves a line of verse this stress or beat is present to our minds at least subconsciously, instantly creating its distinctive effect, and differentiating itself from the plain continuity of normal prose.

By beat we mean the regular recurrence of normally stressed syllables. Such syllables, we repeat, must be normally stressed; that is, the stress should not fall upon syllables that in common speech are not ordinarily accented, and it should not fall upon a word unless it is accented through the part it plays in the sense of the sentence.

Look at the ruined chapel again
Halfway up in the Alpine gorge!
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill, or an iron-forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

In the above lines we see that the stresses indicated by marks are exactly the same as the syllables which would stand out prominently if we read the passage as prose. We see also that the intervening syllables fall in groups of two and three between the outstanding syllables. In other words, we recognize a more or less definite limit to the number of unaccented

syllables that may be attached to the important one. In Greek and Latin poetry, and in the early poetry of the European countries, including England, this was not the case; the number of "neutral" syllables varied greatly. In our day, however, in poetry of the familiar metrical patterns, the so-called "foot" or unit of rhythm is made up of one stressed syllable, accompanied by either one or two unstressed. These relations of stressed and unstressed syllables are analyzed in the science of versification, sometimes called "prosody" or "metrics"; and while it is true that poetry is never, in the hands of a gifted and fluent poet, written off by rules as to the number of syllables in a foot or the number of feet in a line, it is still generally useful to know what this analysis of verse-structure shows as to the verse units into which poetry actually falls. We might remember at the same time that such a knowledge of the rules of versification is useful only for the purposes of clear discussion of verse-effects, and may not function importantly in either the understanding or the enjoyment of poetry — at least for the majority of readers who possess a sense of rhythm.

The foot. — In English verse the various combinations of these stressed and unstressed syllables give us five types of poetical "foot." Of those which contain one syllable accented and one unaccented, we have two types, the first of which is the *trochee*, in which the stress falls regularly on the first of the two syllables:

Take them, Love, the book and me togeth
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also

And the second is the *iambus* or *iambic*, in stressed syllable follows the unstressed:

The way was long; the wind was cold
The minstrel was infirm and old.

Of the foot composed of one stressed and two unstressed syllables we have three types. The first is the *dactyl*, in which the stressed syllable precedes a pair of unemphatic syllables:

This is the forest primeval, but where are the hearts that beneath it
Leaped like the roe when it hears in the woodland the voice of the huntsman?

The next type, the *anapest*, places the accented syllable last of the three:

And the sheen of his spears was like stars on the sea
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

In the last type, the *amphibrach*, the strongly marked syllable falls between the two lighter ones:

Oh talk not to me of a name great in story
The days of our youth are the days of our glory.

In all of the above examples, except the third, the typical foot is unvaried by other feet; but in far the greater part of English poetry the prevailing foot is used in combination with other types, in order

to avoid the monotony of unvaried beat. Almost any poem in the language would show this variety at least occasionally. We see it here:

> He breathed fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
> Clear'd them of heavy vapors, burst them wide
> Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams.

And in the last two lines we see a special variation from the regular foot in the fact that the last foot contains only one stressed syllable, followed by a pause instead of an unaccented syllable. This is very frequent in English verse, serving to mark off the line more distinctly. It may also appear within the line, sometimes producing important metrical effects as in

> Break; break; break
> On thy cold grey stones, oh Sea.

Here the first line is made up entirely of feet of only a single syllable, but with a very marked pause for compensation.

The line. — It is scarcely necessary to say that these poetical feet are arranged in lines, since the line is, as we have seen, the feature of poetry which appeals instantly to the eye. The schoolboy's definition of poetry, however, that it is "prose written in lines of unequal length" shows immediately the extent to which one's eye may deceive him as to the essential thing in poetry. Far the greater part of our poetry is written — in spite of what the printed

line may seem to show — in lines of an equal number of feet throughout. Such line-units include in English practice any number of feet from one to eight. The names given to the various metres, or measures of the number of feet within the line, come from the Greek numerals; dimeter for two feet, trimeter for three, tetrameter for four, pentameter for five, hexameter for six. Seven and eight foot lines are generally described in these express terms. Lines of a single foot are rare except where they are combined with other types in special stanza forms. Two-foot lines are generally too brief to be continuously effective, and frequently they are found to be logically four-foot lines merely cut in two, as we can see here:

Little fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.

On the other hand, where the feet in the line are numerous, the rhythm and pauses tend actually to break it up into smaller units. Seven-foot lines when read aloud often fall readily into alternate beats of three and four, and eight-foot lines are found to be simply doubled fours, as in Poe's *Raven:*

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; — vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow — sorrow for the lost Lenore.

Between these two extremes we find for the most part the common practice of English poets — three-, four-, five-, and six-foot lines.

A poetical line was in its origin a logical division of thought; that is, the line comprised a single phrase or a clause, or one of a number of parallel constructions. This correspondence of line and concept will be seen in the lines below, translated from the ancient English epic *Beowulf*. It is noticeable that in this old verse not only the line, but the half-line, tends to fall into distinct phrase-units.

> What men are ye, | weapon-furnished,
> Clad in corselets, | carried o'er the sea-way
> Hither in a stout ship, | high and ring-prowed,
> Over the swollen | ocean faring?

Verse of the later poetic traditions may or may not retain this relation of line to logic. In Pope we have almost strictly logical line divisions —

> Remote from God, presume not God to scan;
> The proper study of mankind is man.

In English blank verse, on the other hand, the tendency is to begin and end sentences in the middle of the line, and to make the flow of sense continuous from line to line, as in Wordsworth's manner:

> Therefore am I still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth; of all the mighty world
> Of eye, and ear.

Verse in which divisions of sense correspond with the divisions of the lines themselves is called *end-stopt* verse. Verse in which the sense runs on from line to line without any break at the ends of the lines is called *run-on* or *overflow verse*.

Since rhythm, aside from the presence or absence of any other single element of poetical quality, is the one common feature of all poetry, it would follow that the special quality of any piece of poetry will depend first of all upon the nature of the pattern of feet within the line, and of lines within the larger unit. Upon this point much has been said, yet the best of generalizations lead us to doubtful conclusions. On the face of things, a metre of five or six feet to the line would seem to carry with it a sustained effect. This is so in a very general way, and it is true that a large number of our lengthy narrative poems are written in the longer metres. Yet that may be simply because we are used to them. The literatures of other nations and times have given us long poems in four and even three-foot lines. There is also a prevailing feeling that short lines are best adapted for inconsequential or frivolous verse. This too may be so, yet Blake's *The Fly* and Browning's *A Woman's Last Word* demonstrate the suitableness of such measures for serious effects.

What applies to the line applies in some degree to the foot within the line. It is generally felt that the two types of foot — iambic and trochaic — that are composed of two syllables each, move with more

steadiness and dignity than the three types which are more sharply stressed because of the presence of two inferior accents; yet any extensive acquaintance with poetry must again raise the question whether this feeling is due to distinctive characteristics in the two different types or to the weight of literary custom. One might visualize the whole question by a comparison of the metrical patterns of Longfellow's *Hiawatha* and of *Evangeline*, the first in four-foot lines of short (trochaic) feet, the second in six-foot lines of long (dactylic) feet, an eight syllable line in the first instance, an eighteen syllable line in the other. Is the difference in intrinsic poetic quality marked enough to enable us to say with certainty that one is a good narrative metre and the other is not, or that either is suited to a particular kind of theme or a particular spirit in the handling of the theme? Still it may be said on the whole that the lessons of actual usage in English would seem to establish the iambic and the trochaic feet as the ones best adapted to the character and spirit of the language. Dactylic feet are more rarely used, anapests and amphibrachs still more rarely, except as variants in poems written principally in the more customary feet.

Freedom in rhythm. — We have already said that within the limits of liberty allowed by the five types of foot recognized in English verse, better practice has come more and more to approve a free departure from the strict use of a single type of foot. Except

for the interval (about 1700) during which the heroic couplet came into vogue, all English versifiers have accepted and worked upon this principle. In Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson, one finds the prevailing foot as no more than the unifying element in a pattern which is followed not overclosely; and bolder poets have shown what may be accomplished in variety of movement when released from even the loosest principle of a unitary foot. Take this single stanza from George Meredith's *Love in the Valley*, for an illustration of the extent to which absolute regularity of rhythm may be disregarded.

> When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant to the window
> Turns grave eyes craving light, released from dreams,
> Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily
> Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.
> When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
> In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,
> Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
> Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

At first glance this might appear to be a six-foot line, but the logical stresses (those determined by the thought) show it to be a four-foot line, as one may readily see when reading the stanza aloud. But as a four-foot line it has an extraordinary profusion of neutral syllables, frequently running over the approved two to a foot. Even more relaxed are the following lines from our contemporary Walter de la Mare's *The Listeners:*

And a bird flew up out of the bushes
Above the traveler's head;
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
"Is there anybody there?" he said.

There are only three stresses here in both the second and the third verses, yet the third contains thirteen syllables. In both of these selections we stand upon the border of the principle underlying modern "free verse," that the unstressed syllables grouped about a stressed syllable need not be limited in any way as to number.

Before we leave this question of poetic rhythm, it is well for us to recall the fact that basic rhythm, or the actual pattern of lines and feet, is rarely felt or read with the precise beat of the poetic feet that we discover as we analyze it. If we turn to the passage quoted from *Beowulf* (on page 160), we see that upon analysis it falls into a set of lines of predominantly trochaic feet:

Whát men are ye, wéapon-furnished,
Clád in corselets, cárried o'er the sea-way
Híther in a stout ship, hígh and ring-prowed,

But when we read these lines aloud, we find that the actual stresses are on the opening syllables, *whát*, *wéapon*, *clád*, and so on; the others are less strongly accented. Almost any strikingly rhythmic line shows this tendency to fall into larger groups of syllables clustering about a few more strongly marked. This secondary or "superimposed" rhythm

may be readily felt in our quotation from Wordsworth on page 160. Here we find that the secondary rhythm of the five-foot blank verse gives us three instead of five marked accents. This secondary rhythm, it will be seen, is determined largely by the word-groups into which the line logically falls. For instance, in the line

A lóver of the meadows and the woods

the words *lover*, *meadows*, and *woods* are distinctively stressed because they are the outstanding words in three phrasal groups: *a lover — of the meadows — and the woods.*

Rime. — Next to rhythm, the element of greatest determining importance in English poetical practice is rime. Although a very large proportion of the poetry in our language is without rime, it still forms so characteristic and valued a feature of our poetic art that it is not so very surprising, after all, that many people think of it as an indispensable. The principle of rime we all understand, but it may be worth while to define it. In the words *man — scan*, *breeze — trees*, we have simple rime, that is, complete identity of sound except as to the initial consonants, which must be different. What is called double or feminine rime is simple rime followed by syllables identical in sound, as in

Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted.

Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
Sufficient strength of thee for new year's sorrow.

Triple rimes add a second identical syllable, as

> A garment of a mystical sublimity,
> No matter whether russet, silk, or dimity.
>
> Brilliance of scenery, fragrance of greenery
> Failed in impressing his mental machinery.

Such poets as Byron, Browning, Lowell, and Barham have a special fondness for triple rimes involving a number of words:

> Then Portia, addressing a groom, said, "My lad, you a
> Journey must take on the instant to Padua."

The examples we have quoted of triple rime would seem to show that it is less commonly found in poems with gravity of tone or dignity of movement.

Ideally, all rimes should be perfect, that is, should produce complete identity of sound except for the initial consonant. Yet there is a world of difference between ineffectual rime and intentionally free rime. There are certain departures from strict rime which have been sanctioned by the best of poets, such as *soon* and *gone*, *blood* and *brood*, *sword* and *word*. Browning rimes *arrayed* with *said*, *God* with *abode*. Keats rimes *nullity* with *fly*, *voluble* with *swell*. In all these instances the difference from absolute rime is one merely of vowel sounds, and here the world has commonly approved what we used to call "poetic license." The practice is more debatable when the sounds affected are the terminal consonants. Yet who would question the rimes in —

Whenas in silks my Julia goes
Then, then, methinks how sweetly flows
The liquefaction of her clothes.

The question is plainly one of happiness of effect; if the poetic quality is in itself high, we approve the liberty with the rule. Adventurous versifiers, like Byron for example, dare even more. When he rimes *glass* with *was* he violates the principle in respect to both vowel and consonant sounds; *camel is* is rimed only by main strength with *families*.

Rimes are of course not always found in lines in immediate sequence; indeed some of the most interesting effects in verse are to be discovered in subtler arrangements. The simplest rime-patterns are the *couplet*, or sequence of two rimed lines, and the triplet, or sequence of three. In *alternate rime* the first line rimes with the third, and the second with the fourth, as in Gray's *Elegy:*

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can honor's voice invoke the silent dust?
Can flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?

Enclosed rime is the enclosing of two rimed lines between two others which rime:

After dark vapors have oppressed our plains
For a long dreary season, comes a day
Born of the gentle South, and clears away
From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.

Interlaced rime is generally a conventional pattern in which the rimes are presented throughout in some

form of interrupted sequence. In the stanza below from Browning's *In a Year* the first line is found to rime with the fourth, the second with the sixth, the third with the seventh, and the fifth with the eighth.

That was all I meant,
To be just,
And the passion I had raised
To content.
Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange?

In the following out of such a pattern through a number of stanzas, there are subtle recurrent echoes of rime words all but lost in the memory. *Interlaced rime* may also appear in forms that do not repeat a definite stanza pattern, as in Milton's *Lycidas* and Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality.*

Stanzas. — A poem may or may not be divided into stanzas, or spaced divisions. A stanza is in most cases less a unit of structure (which would make it correspond with the prose paragraph) than an arbitrary unit based upon a pattern of both rime and rhythm. That is, its purpose is not logical, but artistic — to furnish a unit of design that may be repeated indefinitely. Stanzas vary greatly in form, from the compact two riming lines of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall,* and Browning's *The Boy and the Angel,* to intricate schemes of seven, eight, nine, and more lines. There is no theoretical limit to invention in

stanza forms, but from the variety of forms in existence, experience has separated some as specially fitted for continuous use. It may be worth our while to illustrate a few of the best known types.

The quatrain is the most familiar of stanzas, appearing in a variety of metres and with rime schemes of widely different effects. We have just quoted one from Gray's *Elegy* on page 167. Below we give in order a quatrain from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, one from Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, and one from Browning's *The Lost Mistress*.

> But in my spirit will I dwell,
> And dream my dream, and hold it true;
> For though my lips may breathe adieu,
> I cannot think the thing farewell. — (TENNYSON)

> The moving finger writes; and having writ,
> Moves on; nor all your piety nor wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.
> — (FITZGERALD)

> Tomorrow we meet the same, then, Dearest?
> May I take your hand in mine?
> Mere friends are we, — well, friends the merest
> Keep much that I resign. — (BROWNING)

Of formal stanzas with conventional rime-schemes, the best known in English literature are the *Ottava Rima*, the *Rime Royal*, and the *Spenserian Stanza*. Their metre and rime-patterns may be seen in the examples given below. The *Ottava Rima*, derived

from the Italian, is the most familiar, particularly in Byron's satiric narratives:

> Her presence was as lofty as her state;
> Her beauty of that overpowering kind
> Whose force description only would abate.
> I'd rather leave it much to your own mind,
> Than lessen it by what I could relate
> Of forms and features; it would strike you blind
> Could I do justice to the full detail:
> So, luckily for both, my phrases fail.

The Rime Royal is an ancient English stanza, favored by Chaucer, but more rarely encountered in verse of our day. John Masefield uses it in his *Widow in the Bye Street.* This stanza is from Chaucer:

> Ful many a yeer in high prosperitee
> Liven thise two in concord and in reste,
> And richely his doghter maried he
> Unto a lord, oon of the worthieste
> Of al Itaille; and then in pees and reste
> His wives fader in his court he kepeth,
> Til that the soule out of his body crepeth.

Possibly the greatest achievement in stanza-form that English literature has given us is the so-called Spenserian Stanza, first used in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene.*

> And more, to lull him in his slumber soft,
> A trickling stream from high rock tumbling down
> And ever drizzling rain upon the loft,
> Mixt with a murmuring wind, much like the sound
> Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swoun:

No other noise, nor peoples' troublous cries,
As still are wont t'annoy the walléd town,
Might there be heard, but careless quiet lies,
Wrapt in eternal silence far from enemies.

Blank verse. — Certainly the most important poetical medium developed in English literature is English blank verse. This was first used a little before the time of Shakespeare, soon becoming the almost exclusive vehicle for the Elizabethan drama, in which it underwent a development within Shakespeare's life-time, and largely in his own plays, that quickly fixed its main features. English blank verse is written in pentameter lines, without rime, and with the iambic as the characteristic foot. Dispensing with rime, it approximates the continuity of prose, yet it takes from the prevailing iambic foot a steady and dignified rhythm. The peculiar usefulness of such a medium for the poetical drama lies in this fusion of the diction, imagery, and imaginative grasp of poetry with something of the continuity and plain virtues of prose.

In early blank verse we find a rather natural tendency to allow construction to accommodate itself to the poetical line, so that the end of the line is likely to be a logical pause, and sentences and major constructions most frequently close with the line. We may see this illustrated in the " mighty line " of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590).

Let ugly Darkness with her rusty coach,
Engirt with tempests, wrapt in pitchy clouds,

Smother the earth with never-fading mists!
And let her horses from their nostrils breathe
Rebellious winds and dreadful thunder-claps!
That in this terror Tamburlaine may live,
And my pined soul, resolved in liquid air,
May still excruciate his tormented thoughts!
Then let the stony dart of senseless cold
Pierce through the center of my withered heart,
And make a passage for my loathed life.

Notice too that the rhythm of this early blank verse is nearly regular iambic, with few departures from this unitary foot.

The use of blank verse for dramatic dialogue brought about a tendency for the idea or construction to overflow into the following line, and even to terminate with the middle of a line instead of with the end, thus eliminating the monotony of regular pauses. Shakespeare's use of blank verse shows a steady development in this direction, until in the latter part of his career we find the very free-flowing blank verse of *The Tempest.*

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
Though with their high wrongs, I am struck to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. Go, release them, Ariel:
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
And they shall be themselves.

The increase in the fluency of this blank verse over Marlowe's may be traced not only to the displacement of "end-stopt" by "run-on" lines, but to constant variations in metrical stress (that is, the use of various types of foot) and to the presence of many "feminine" endings, or line-endings in which the terminal accent does not fall upon the very last syllable of the line.

In Milton blank verse reaches its climax of impressive power. Construction is quite independent of line-length; there is great variety in the character of the foot; and stresses and pauses are so variously placed that no two successive lines are likely to show the same poetic pattern. To these technical characteristics Milton added a diction of unequalled weight, dignity, and suggestive power. Examples of Milton's verse we quote on pages 13, 193, 194–5. In more modern practice English blank verse has in the main moved in a range between the lucid ease of Shakespeare's later period and the splendor of Milton. Its variety in the nineteenth century may be illustrated in the plain continuity of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, the artistic fullness of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, the careless strength of Browning's *Ring and the Book*, and the impressiveness of William Watson's *A Study in Contrasts*, from which we quote in order.

> Such dispositions then were mine unearned
> By aught, I fear, of genuine desert —
> Mine through Heaven's grace and inborn aptitudes.
> And not to leave the story of that time

Imperfect, with these habits must be joined
Moods melancholy, fits of spleen, that loved
A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring;
A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice
And inclination mainly, and the mere
Redundancy of youth's contentedness.

—WORDSWORTH, *The Prelude*

Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood —
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter — all her bright hair streaming down —
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as though she smiled.

—TENNYSON, *Lancelot and Elaine*

Yet, being sobered now, what is it you ask
By way of explanation? There's the fact!
It seems to fill the universe with sight
And sound, — from the four corners of this earth
Tells itself over, to my sense at least.
But you may want it lower set i' the scale, —
Too vast, too close it clangs in the ear, perhaps:
You'd stand back just to comprehend it more,
Well then, let me, the hollow rock, condense
The voice o' the sea and wind, interpret you
The mystery of this murder. God above!
It is too paltry, such a transference
O' the storm's roar to the cranny of the stone!

—BROWNING, *The Ring and the Book*

Ev'n so, methought, the genius of the East,
Reposeful, patient, undemonstrative,
Luxurious, enigmatically sage,
Dispassionately cruel, might look down
On all the fever of the Occident; —
The brooding mother of the unfilial world
Recumbent on her own antiquity,
Aloof from all mutations and desires,
Too proud alike for protest or assent
When new thoughts thunder at her massy door; —
Another brain dreaming another dream,
Another heart recalling other loves,
Too gray and grave for our adventurous hopes,
For our precipitate pleasures too august,
And in majestic taciturnity
Refraining her illimitable scorn.

— WILLIAM WATSON, *A Study in Contrasts*

Free verse. — We have spoken of blank verse as being something of an approach to prose in poetry. Of course this is not strictly true, except in the limited sense that it may carry less of the impress of particular poetic devices. In "free verse," however, about which there has been so much discussion within the last generation, we find in some degree a program of deliberate avoidance of most of the conventional features of the poetry to which we are most accustomed. Free verse (or *vers libre*) is not really a literary novelty, for its poetical qualities are not essentially different from those we may find in the English version of the Psalms of David; and in its characteristic form it was written by William Blake in the later eighteenth century and by Walt

Whitman in the nineteenth. As a basis for a new poetical doctrine, however, these departures from the conventional are so sweeping that at the very outset of our consideration of free verse we are obliged to determine anew what we mean by poetry.

We have already defined the one common feature of all poetry as rhythm; and we have defined rhythm as the *regular* recurrence of stress according to some accepted unitary scheme. Yet this is a definition of poetry that actually applies only to European poetical tastes and formulas. The Psalms of David, for example, as we have said, fitted the Hebrew conception of poetry; yet they do not possess rhythm within any schematic arrangement. Furthermore, even in English usage we have always agreed to call "poetic" certain qualities of utterance entirely apart from precise rhythmic formulas; and almost any well-read person may baffle even a trained and attentive ear with passages of prose intended as prose that sound like poetry, and passages of poetry intended as poetry that sound like prose. Take the following as illustrations.

The sun is coming down to earth, and the fields and the waters shout to him golden shouts. He comes, and his heralds run before him, and touch the leaves of oaks and planes and beeches lucid green, and the pine stems redder gold; leaving brightest footprints upon thickly weeded banks, where the foxglove's last upper bells incline, and bramble shoots wander amidst moist rich herbage.

Ages, precedents, have long been accumulating undirected materials,
America brings builders, and brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done their work
and pass'd to other spheres,
A work remains, the work of surpassing all they have done.
America, curious toward foreign characters, stands by its own
at all hazards,
Stands removed, spacious, composite, sound — initiates the
true use of precedents,
Does not repel them, or the past, or what they have produced
under their forms,
Takes the lesson with calmness, perceives the corpse slowly
borne from the house,
Perceives that it waits a little while in the door — that it was
fittest for its days,
That its life has descended to the stalwart and well shaped heir
who approaches,
And that he shall be fittest for his days.

Any period, one nation must lead;
One land must be the promise and reliance of the future.

Whatever differences there are between these two passages argue rather distinctly in favor of the first as the more visibly poetic. Yet it is part of a descriptive passage from Meredith's novel *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. The second passage is from Walt Whitman's poem, *As I Sat Alone on Blue Ontario's Shore*. This contrast shows little beyond the fact that prose can be poetical and poetry be prosaic, or in other words, that the line of distinction between poetry and prose is not so precise as for the mere purpose of definition it would be convenient for us to have it.

The underlying aim of free verse is, as we have said, the avoidance of poetic conventionalism. But

poets such as Wordsworth have declared against conventionalism in imagery, diction, and the like, without discarding that feature which previous generations had been taught to regard as the elemental test of poetic quality — metrical regularity. What controversy has arisen over free verse attaches principally and almost exclusively to this question whether a poet who discards metre has any real right to be called a poet. But a discussion that hinges so strictly upon a question of terms would seem to be rather futile, especially when we consider that the original Greek sense of the word " poet " was not attached to a writer who worked only in metrical patterns. The position of the two sides to the controversy resolves itself into a contention on the one hand that " poetry " has customarily meant something that it is convenient to have it continue to mean, and on the other hand that that very restriction of the sense of the word " poetry " is only one sign that poetry itself has fallen on evil days, and must be given new vigor, spontaneity, and close relation to life. We must remember, however, that the mere rejection of metrical patterns is not the whole of the program for retrieving poetry from what the vers-librists regard as its rut of conventionalism. With the departure from fixed metre the newer poets also look toward a less stereotyped poetical phraseology, a greater visual clearness, and more powerful imaginative suggestion. They are also the apostles of a kind of poetical realism, which enables them to

deal strongly and spiritedly with what a poet like Tennyson or Keats must have regarded as impossible subjects for poetry — skyscrapers, railroads, physical brutality, and scenes and episodes of unredeemed squalor.

As far as free verse embodies definite ideas of poetical form, to the vers-librist the line is a phrase-unit, and its poetic character comes from free and "natural" rhythm, together with the poetic qualities that belong to vivid phraseology, sharpness of visual image, and strength of impression. For the purposes of illustrating these poetical possibilities, we may quote from Amy Lowell's *Meeting-House Hill:*

I must be mad, or very tired,
When the curve of a blue bay beyond a railroad track
Is shrill and sweet to me like the sudden springing of a tune,
And the sight of a white church above thin trees in a city square
Amazes my eyes as though it were the Parthenon.

or Carl Sandburg's *Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard* —

Stuff of the moon
Runs on the lapping sand
Out to the longest shadows.
Under the curving willows,
And round the creep of the wave-line,
Fluxions of yellow and dusk on the waters
Make a wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in the night.

We might take a bit from John Gould Fletcher's *Mexican Quarter* as an instance of the marked con-

nection of free verse with other experiments in the direction of vividness and force; particularly when the ugly detail is made to serve these purposes:

By an alley lined with tumble-down shacks,
And street-lamps askew, half-sputtering,
Feebly glimmering on gutters choked with filth, and dogs
Scratching their mangy backs:
Half naked children are running about,
Women puff cigarettes in black doorways,
Crickets are crying:
Men slouch sullenly
Into the shadows.
Behind a bed of cactus,
The smell of a dead horse
Mingles with the smell of tamales frying.

More rhapsodic quality is found in the poetry of Hilda Doolittle, who has written the following.

HEAT

O wind, rend open the heat,
cut apart the heat,
rend it to tatters.

Fruit cannot drop
through this thick air —
fruit cannot fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes.

Cut through the heat —
plough through it,
turning it on either side
of your path.

Possibly the lay mind would be more tolerant of free verse if its defenders were less doctrinaire, and less sweeping in their condemnation of the older poetical conventions. Possibly, too, the general attitude toward free verse might be more receptive if the conception of the free verse line were less vague and the discussion of rhythm generally more transparent. There is also an unescapable antipathy (on the part of conventionalists, perhaps) to an artistic program that is essentially individualist, even egocentric, and that has its plain relations to the "futuristic" and "expressionistic" creeds in the arts generally. On the other hand, there can be no denying the stimulus that practitioners of free verse have given to the writing and reading of poetry, particularly when our prose-minded age seems to be turning to other forms of literary culture.

Whatever our final judgment as to the effectiveness of this program, it should be given in fairness upon critical grounds, and should involve no quibble about definitions. It is quite possible that the writers of free verse have claimed more for their art than older lovers of poetry are willing to concede, but the test of their achievement is their power to evoke real emotional response. There can be no doubt that this achievement has been reached by Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, Miss Amy Lowell, and Robert Frost, if not by many other figures identified with the movement.

The language of poetry. — When we speak of a "language of poetry" we may be begging an important critical question — whether there is anything in the quality of particular spoken sounds, aside from the ideas with which we associate them, that possesses specifically poetic effect. It has been waggishly said that if we accept the commonly assumed ideas of "tone color" in words, then "boiled halibut," "groceries," and even "sewage," must be intrinsically poetic. Their associations make them, of course, poetically ludicrous. Further than this, there is no small group of contemporary writers who refuse to accept the view that words are even by their associations poetical, except in the "genteel" poetry against which they protest. Be the facts what they may, however, criticism has traditionally recognized certain fitnesses in the sound-quality of a word, and in its associations, that stand quite apart from its usableness as the vehicle for an idea and make it more available for poetic effect.

Here we find ourselves confronting one form of the age-old question "What is beauty?" Is it simply the sense of fitness; is it a conception absolute in itself and standing apart from the influences of culture and tradition; is it born of the spirit; or is it the product of obscure physical sensations? How would our idea of beauty — in any conceivable object — compare with an Eskimo's? How does it with our neighbor's? All these questions are more pressing, and more difficult to answer, in poetry than

in more readily self-interpreting literary forms. When we apply the question to the very elements of poetic effect, we might find ourselves arguing with a Frenchman, a Russian, an Italian, as to matters of intrinsic beauty of sound; and with a Japanese, a Persian, or someone else of radically different culture, as to what sort of word was beautiful by association. Take the word "nightingale" as an instance. In actual sound is it more beautiful than "farthingale?" In the matter of association, does it make poetry beautiful, or has poetry made it beautiful? An American can afford to ask this question, since not one American in a hundred has either seen or heard a nightingale. The contact of the other ninety-nine with the word is to all intents and purposes exclusively poetical.

But, taking the position of the man who may be convinced, let us review briefly the judgments of poetical values that are implicit in far the greater part of our English verse. We may be quite wrong in believing that there is a beauty inherent in any type of word for any reason; but we can (and should) at any rate examine the principle that so plainly underlies the verse of Keats or Tennyson — that effective words are those in which sound as well as meaning creates an emotional impression, and in which there is some beauty in the idea suggested.

Tone color. — So far we have dealt with the aspects of poetry which have to do with its mechanical construction. Rhythm and rime deal only with

the movement of poetry, not with its material. The stuff of which poetry is made is words; rhythm and rime have to do not with the character of words, but with their arrangement. The question we confront now is: May words in themselves possess beauty or ugliness, and may there be an additional beauty or ugliness growing out of their relations to one another? We see the perfect rime of "*worm*" and "*squirm*," of "*oil*" and "*spoil*," but should we expect to find them in anything but comic verse? And are there good words which, safe and clear as they may be for everyday purposes, make bad poetry when put together? The question is readily illustrated in these lines from Browning —

> I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid
> To have just looked, when this man came to die,
> And seen who lined the clean gray garret sides
> And stood about the neat low truckle bed.

We may remember the old saying that "there are two words for everything," one of which may be more usable than the other. In prose one's choice is governed principally by his wish for precision and force. But in poetry a word is not merely the symbol of an idea, but a sound, which as a sound may or may not create a definite impression, and which in connection with other sounds may further create, or fail of, effect. An example of the achievement of a perfect exactitude — may be seen in a stanza from Browning's *Old Pictures in Florence*.

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect — how else? They shall never change:
We are faulty — Why not? We have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, no wise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

The same clarity of utterance, with added fluidity, we find in these stanzas from Tennyson's *In Memoriam:*

Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt;
I lull a fancy trouble-tost
With "Love's too precious to be lost;
A little grain shall not be spilt."

And in that solace can I sing,
Till out of painful phrases wrought
There flutters up a happy thought,
Self-balanced on a lightsome wing:

Since we deserved the name of friends,
And thine effect so lives in me,
A part of mine may live in thee
And move thee on to noble ends.

Word-values. — The difference in effect is not accidental, but is to be traced to a recognition of sound values — the result of study, and something therefore to be studied if we wish to embrace its art. Some thought upon the special poetical values of different consonants and vowels will carry us far on the track of the secret of charm in the passage from

Tennyson just quoted — or possibly convince us that his art is only exotic or artificial.

Consonants fall loosely within two groups which we may call "stopped" consonants, or those of a sudden sharp effect, and "sustained" consonants, which are without the quick impact of the checked consonants. The checked consonants include the "explosives" *b* and *p*, the "gutturals" *g* and *k*, and the "dentals" *t* and *d*. The sustained consonants are for poetical purposes primarily the "liquids" *l* and *r*, the "sibilants" *s*, *z*, *sh*, and *th*, and the "nasals," *m* and *n*. In a general way it has been felt that the sustained consonants are poetically more agreeable than the checked, since they lend a gentler, more muted effect to speech. The checked consonants give rougher effects. While it is true that the ideal of grace in poetry gives general preference to vowel and "unstopped" consonant sounds, the hard consonants have their place when they are suited to the result to be gained. The difference between "soft" and "hard" words is clear enough in words like *silver*, *mossy*, *pulse*, *even*, *warmer*, *lulled*, on the one hand, and on the other, such words as *broken*, *grim*, *clutch*, *inky*, *dropped*, *crash*. Every consonant effects every vowel, every vowel every consonant. Consonants may be delicate alone, harsh-sounding when combined. Long vowels tend to sustain the effect either of strength or of delicacy in the neighboring consonants. Short vowels give the effect of sharp and rapid movement. General-

izations, however, cannot carry us far, unless our eyes and ears actually confront the thing to be found. Let us, then, examine a group of poetical phrases in which these varied qualities are evident. It is almost unnecessary to say that the distinctive sound-value of the line comes from the character of its stressed rather than its unstressed syllables, and that the repetition of a significant sound emphasizes its effect.

In the following lines we see that the telling ideas are conveyed with vigor by the use of stopped consonants:

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.

His spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mailed right hand
Blazed bright and baleful.

. . . Earth, crazy for its broken power.

And one sharp tree — 'tis a cypress — stands
By the many hundred years red-rusted.
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit o'er-crusted.

Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The armed rhinoceros or the Hyrcan tiger.

Let us compare these effects with quite different ones in which the consonants are smooth or muted.

The wide-winged sunset of the misty Marsh.

With the cool white foam in the noonday heat
Murmuring sweetness over the sweet
Golden light of her golden feet,
And her deep hair shimmering down to her knee.

'Sheeted memories of the Past:
Shrouded forms that start and sigh
As they pass the wanderer by.

One can detect special vowel as well as consonant qualities in these fragments:

Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain.

All our household are at rest;
The hall is silent as the cell.

Like the long surf upon a distant shore
Raking the sea-worn pebbles up and down.

The grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow-half-moon large and low.

We have spoken of the appropriateness of special sounds for special impressions. The perfection of that appropriateness is the device of "onomatopœia" (Greek for "name-making") in which the sound produces something of the sense of the word. Many words are of course in their very origins descriptive of sounds and sense-impressions — such as *buzz*, *hum*, *crack*, and *slip*, but poetic composition involves more than the use of such obvious devices — as we may see here —

The drowsy hum of bees.

The quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match.

And not a sound came to his struggling ears
But the low trickling rustle of the leaves.

By he goes at the gallop, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.

Southey's *The Cataract of Lodore* is a daring, but not poetically valuable, experiment in this sort of description.

Alliteration and assonance. — It may have been noted already that in many of the examples just given a characteristic sound is emphasized by repetition. This is known as "alliteration," a very common poetic device. We find alliteration on the letter *m* in

> Mimes in the form of God on high
> Mutter and mumble low.

And on *sw* and *c* in

> And swooned at her sweetness, and swiftly revived into cold
> Clear currents of emerald rapture again and again.

Alliteration, it may be seen, is usually just what rime is not. Rime is identity in all but the initial letters (or more properly sounds) of two syllables — *well* and *cell*. Alliteration is identity only of the initial letters — *well* and *warm*. A related effect is "assonance," which is identity of vowel sounds only, as in *well* — *best*, or, in polysyllables, as in *monster-plodded*. Assonance is likely to be most agreeable when the accompanying consonants are closely related, as in this stanza from Mrs. Browning's *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*.

> Ever, evermore the *while in* a slow *silence* she kept *smiling*,
> While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks;
> Then with both her hands *enfolding* both of his, she softly *told him*
> "Bertram, if I say I love thee, — 'tis the vision only speaks."

Echo. — Echoed words are also frequently used in poetry, both for emphasis of the thought and for intensification of sound effects:

> Though fallen on evil days,
> On evil days though fallen, and evil times.

> I saw her first when but a little child;
> Beaten she had been for a little fault.

> Lakes that endlessly outspread
> Their lone waters, lone and dead —
> Their still waters, still and chilly
> With the snows of the lolling lily.

Words of association. — Possessing somewhat the same choiceness of effect as words which are poetic by their mere sound are those words, generally called "words of association," which call up attractive or vivid images, or which carry large and suggestive connotations. Such words are *slumbrous*, *everlasting*, *depths*, *splendor*, *shattered*, *radiance*, *bower*, *Paradise*, *odorous*. Their power is in the spaciousness or the intrinsic beauty of the ideas they embrace, and they include all the words which have a special or inevitable fitness for the picture or idea to be conveyed. They stand out clearly in this passage from Keats' *To Autumn:*

> Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?
> Think not of them; thou hast thy music too,
> While barréd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
> And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

The effective use of all the artifices of poetry that we have been discussing, depends upon their fitness, and upon restraint in their employment. Where a poet is given excessively to the use of soft and musical phrase, he may become insipid, as even so perfect a poet as Keats tends to become in his longer poems, *Endymion* and *Hyperion*. On the other hand, the insistent use of alliteration, assonance, and related devices, is the mark either of a beginner, as in Tennyson's earlier poems, or of a workman whose daring outruns his discrimination, as is frequently the case with Swinburne.

Imagery. — What we have been considering, up to this point, as elements of poetic art, are words and their component sounds, with slight attention or none to their place in the web of thought. There are forms of ornament, however, in both prose and poetry, but particularly in poetry, which use ideas themselves for decorative effect, either through imagery or through association. By imagery we mean pictorial effect, or the use of impressions of sense for emotional appeal. Often imagery flows from the subject itself of a poem, as we see in a

descriptive lyric like Shelley's *Lines Written among the Euganean Hills* —

> Beneath is spread like a green sea
> The waveless plains of Lombardy,
> Bounded by the vaporous air
> Islanded by cities fair;

Or in these lines from Robert Bridges —

> But in the purple pool there nothing grows,
> Not the white water-lily spoked with gold;
> Though best she loves the hollows, and well knows
> On quiet streams her broad shields to unfold.

But imagery may also appeal to other senses than sight, may in fact apply to any sensory impression, as in William Collins' *Ode to Evening:*

> Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat
> With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing
> Or where the beetle winds
> His small but sullen horn.

Poetry also expands its possibilities by a freer use than in prose of ideas and images of association. These are found chiefly in the rhetorical devices of *simile* and *figure*. Simile is simply comparison:

> Like drops of honey came their words;
> But fainter than a young lamb's bleat.

Such a comparison may also be elaborately developed, as when Milton pictures Raphael surveying the Earth from the expanses of the skies:

He sees,
Not unconform to other shining globes,
Earth, and the Garden of God, with cedars crowned
Above all hills; as when by night the glass
Of Galileo, less assured, observes
Imagined lands and regions in the moon;
Or pilot from amidst the Cyclades,
Delos or Samos first appearing, kens
A cloudy spot.

Ancient epic poetry dealt largely in such similes, and later poetry, imitative of this tradition, went far into the field of legend and learning for recondite allusions. Modern taste, however, is less attracted to extraneous figures, which seem to us gratuitous and sometimes pedantic. The interest of a real and suggestive associated idea, however, is as sharp as ever. Take Robert Bridges' *Septuagesima* —

Now all the windows with frost are blinded,
As punctual day with greedy smile
Lifts like a Cyclops evil minded
His ruddy eyeball over the isle.

Figures of speech. — As we must expect, poetry depends largely too upon the force and beauty of figures of speech. A figure of speech (or metaphor) is a comparison that is given more vivid life by being used as an actual substitute for the idea which it illustrates. Tennyson's *Margaret* opens with similes —

What lit your eyes with tearful power,
Like moonlight on a falling shower?

. . . . . .

A tearful grace as tho' you stood
Between the rainbow and the sun.

But in the second stanza, he introduces figures:

> Your spirit is the calmed sea,
> Laid by the tumult of the fight
> You are the evening-star, alway
> Remaining betwixt dark and bright.

The difference lies simply in the fact that in the metaphor the object is said actually *to be* the thing to which it is really only likened. The range of metaphors is enormous, but discussion of them comes scarcely within our province. Almost any rhetoric may be found to treat their variety and application.

Poetical diction. — About " poetical diction " and structure, or the quality of phrase suitable for poetry, much has been said and written. The ancient view of the question was that poetry ennobled ideas through its elevation of language. In other words, the language of poetry was supposed to be more choice, more vivid, more beautiful, more dignified, than that of prose. What the range of effects is in various directions of poetical refinement we may see, once again, by examples.

The height of sustained splendor and dignity in phraseology is generally conceded to be Milton's blank verse. Here is his picture of Satan recovering himself after his precipitation from the gates of Heaven into the lake of fire:

> Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
> His mighty stature; on each hand the flames
> Driven backward slope their pointing spires, and, rolled
> In billows, leave i' the midst a horrid vale.

Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,
That felt unusual weight; till on dry land
He lights — if it were land that ever burned
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,
And such appeared in hue as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
Of thundering Etna, whose combustible
And fuelled entrails, thence conceiving fire,
Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singéd bottom all involved
With stench and smoke. Such resting found the sole
Of unblest feet. Him followed his next mate;
Both glorying to have scaped the Stygian flood
As gods, and by their own recovered strength,
Not by the sufferance of supernal power.

This is impressive, not wholly melodious. Its quality, which is quite characteristic of Milton, is secured largely from its Latin vocabulary, elaborate phrase and sentence structure, and weighty figures, all typical of what we might call the oratorical style — but gaining its virtues of mass and strength at the expense of charm and ease.

The critical mind of the early eighteenth century rebelled at the lavishness, the ponderousness, and the architectural sentences of Milton. To this age precision and compression were the ideal qualities, and an age followed Milton in which "taste" was deliberately invoked to check the spread of fancy. The result was highly formal, dressing simple ideas in stately phrases, and placing upon conspicuous

adjectives the burden of "epithet" description. This passage from Dr. Johnson represents that stage in literary taste:

> With native lustre and unborrowed greatness,
> Thou shin'st, bright maid, superior to distress;
> Unlike the trifling race of vulgar beauties,
> Those glittering dewdrops of a vernal morn,
> That spread their colors to the genial beam,
> And, sparkling, quiver to the breath of May;
> But, when the tempest, with sonorous wing,
> Sweeps o'er the grove, forsake the lab'ring bough,
> Dispersed in air, or mingled with the dust.

Against effects of this sort we have the reaction of the later romantic revival, taking form in Wordsworth (about 1800) in an unaffected directness and simplicity of phrase, and supported by Wordsworth's doctrine that perfect poetry should employ poetically the sober every-day speech of unlearned men. This idea in actual use is seen in the opening of his *Resolution and Independence* (sometimes called *The Leech Gatherer*):

> There was a roaring in the wind all night;
> The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
> But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
> The birds are singing in the distant woods.
> Over his own sweet voice the Stock Dove broods;
> The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters
> And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.
>
> All things that love the sun are out of doors;
> The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
> The grass is bright with rain-drops; — on the moors
> The hare is running races in her mirth;

And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

To this new-found simplicity of effect Keats shortly added a hitherto unequaled fineness and grace of phrase, but still a grace, in the main, of simple phrase.

Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His fantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calmed twilight of Platonic shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near —
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbored to him, and yet so unseen
She stood: he passed, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapped like his mantle, while her eyes
Followed his steps, and her neck regal white
Turned, syllabling thus. . . .

These four passages probably serve to illustrate the range of familiarly recognized effects in English poetical phraseology. As with all the considerations that we have been discussing, it is impossible to say "This is good; that is bad," since there is a taste to respond to every style. With our modern interest in æsthetic experiment we have moved since the close of the nineteenth century into new vistas of gorgeous phrase on the one hand, into sober fields of bare speech on the other; so that a modern anthology may present even more striking extremes of poetical quality than those we have quoted.

Poetical types. — Before we leave the general subject of poetry, there remain to be considered some of the forms and some of the recognized moods of verse which give identity to some widely familiar poetic types. Old attempts to classify poetry divided it into three groups — narrative, lyric, and dramatic. Dramatic poetry, however, separates itself from the other two groups not because it is a different sort of poetry, but because it is drama. We have left, then, the divisions of narrative and lyric poetry, scarcely a satisfactory classification, because it omits proper consideration of wholly descriptive verse like Thomson's *Seasons*, and " poetry of ideas " such as Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Yet the existing classification does embrace far the larger part of the poetry with which we shall meet; so we can accept it for convenience.

Narrative poetry. — Narrative poetry is of course story-telling poetry, poetry which deals in a consecutive way with action or experience. It includes things as short as Wordsworth's *Anecdote for Fathers* or Browning's *How We Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, and as long as, and longer than, Longfellow's *Evangeline* or Tennyson's *Princess*. The narrative type is so immensely diverse in length and form that we can suggest only one precept as to its aim and method — that it must be good poetry, and handle its story attractively — a generalization of almost perfect vagueness. There are a few narrative forms, however, that stand out with more

clearness in the past history of literature — most notable among them being the ballad and the epic.

The ballad. — The ballad is an ancient poetic type retrieved from obscurity only within the last century and a half. The fact that it was common in the mouths of unlettered people had made it the object of literary contempt. With the revival of interest in old literature while the romantic movement was gathering momentum at the close of the eighteenth century, it came under scholarly notice. Since then ballads have been widely studied for the relation they bear to the history of our culture and for the light they throw upon poetry in its formative stages. The ballad is in fact about the most primitive and unliterary form in which poetry appears. It belongs to a period and a society in which poetry was produced almost without literary consciousness. One theory for the origin of the ballads is that they were composed in common by a number of people, quite impromptu, and with contributions from any and all present. But whether they were actually composed by a group, or by a more gifted individual, at any rate no traces of personal authorship adhered to them. They were not written down, but became current in the community as common songs or recitations, and in the course of transmission from mouth to mouth, from place to place, and from generation to generation, they underwent great changes, as many as forty versions of a single English ballad having reached our times. When we say that they

possess none of the marks of individual authorship, we mean that they have no distinction of tone, no literary elegancies, no peculiarities of style, no subjective quality or glimpse of the mind of an author. They are usually simple, sometimes coarse, in language, generally without dramatic emphasis; they ordinarily enforce no moral and contain no social criticism. Their themes touch as a rule only the situations and legends that might arise in the simplest feudal society. In addition, the circulation of the ballad by word of mouth brings it about that there is no such thing as a "correct copy" of any given ballad, and the lack of an authentic copy tends not merely to produce variations, but to create and spread faults and omissions. We may expect, therefore, to find bad rhythm, bad rime, lost lines, and even important gaps in the sequence of the narrative.

The significant literary features of the ballad may best be seen by reference to an actual example of the type — *Baby Lon.*

There were three ladies lived in a bower,
  Eh vow bonnie
And they went out to pull a flower
  On the bonnie banks o Fordie.

They hadna pu'ed a flower but ane,
When up started to them a banisht man.

He's taen the first sister by her hand,
And he's turned her round and made her stand.

'It's whether will ye be a rank robber's wife,
Or will ye die by my wee pen-knife?'

'It's I'll not be a rank robber's wife,
But I'll rather die by your wee pen-knife.'

He's killed this may, and he's laid her by,
For to bear the red rose company.

He's taken the second ane by the hand,
And he's turned her round and made her stand.

'It's whether will ye be a rank robber's wife,
Or will ye die by my wee pen-knife?'

'I'll not be a rank robber's wife,
But I'll rather die by your wee pen-knife.'

He's killed this may, and he's laid her by
For to bear the red rose company.

He's taken the youngest ane by the hand,
And he's turned her round and made her stand.

Says, 'Will ye be a rank robber's wife,
Or will ye die by my wee pen-knife?'

'I'll not be a rank robber's wife,
Nor will I die by your wee pen-knife.'

'For I hae a brother in this wood
And gin ye kill me, it's he'll kill thee.'

'What's thy brother's name? Come tell to me.'
'My brother's name is Baby Lon.'

'Oh sister, sister, what have I done!
O have I done this ill to thee!'

'O since I've done this evil deed,
Good sall never be seen o me.'

He's taken out his wee pen-knife,
And he's twyned himsel o his ain sweet life.

Here we see all the marks of simplicity that we have already discussed. The story is told without distinction or emphasis, without any reference to time or place, without any introductory matter, without social setting of any sort, and with singular, but quite characteristic, omissions of transitional links in the narrative. Probably the most striking feature of the ballad, however, is its handling of the murders of the three sisters, one after the other, with no essential change of phrase. This repetition, since it does actually carry the narrative forward, has been called " incremental repetition." This is one of the commonest marks of ballad composition, and is supposed to be a relic of " communal composition," in which stock situations would naturally be treated in stock phrases. Likewise the burden, or refrain, " Eh vow bonnie . . . On the bonnie banks o Fordie," is taken to be a remnant of participation by the listeners in the narrative . . . a " coming in on the chorus," as we say. The burden, although printed nowadays only with the first stanza, serves as the second and fourth lines of every stanza. The whole question of how and how far the group were responsible for part of the composition or participated in the recital or singing is one about which there has been much argument, with a distinct drift in favor of group composition for at least the oldest types of ballad. Any good collection of ballad poetry will be found to discuss at length this interesting question.

The epic. — To the epic also attaches most of what we have said with regard to the popular origin and interest of the ballad. It is, however, a much more expansive and finished form than the ballad. The epic is typically a very long narrative poem, depicting the life and deeds of some great figure who, possibly historical in the beginning of things, has had gathered about him a mass of legendary narrative which tends to idealize him and to make him the pattern of character and action for the people among whom the epic is current. Like the ballad, it is circulated by word of mouth, finding at last a more or less fixed and standard form when it is committed to writing in a later and literate age. Like the ballad also, it carries no marks of definite authorship, but shows many evidences of the changes and the errors that attach to oral transmission. It is like the ballad, too, in its relative freedom from the conscious literary touch, in the breadth with which it depicts the common life, and in its failure to distinguish the dramatic from the undramatic. The epic in fact is a result of the growth and fusion of simple poetic types like the ballad, the song, and the dirge. The stages of its growth are, first, the accumulation and concentration of a varied mass of myth and history connected with an outstanding personality, and second, the attraction to such a personality of other stories and legends that are part of the floating traditions of the time. Its reflection of custom, of actual habits of life, is generally literal and plain, for

whatever its tendency to exalt the characters of its central figures, its handling of the familiar background of social life is by intention realistic. The supernatural may touch the hero at every point in his career, but his social surroundings are conveyed with close truth. And essential matters of character and social relations are also convincingly presented. The talk, the quarrels, the speeches, the gifts, the feasts, the fights, of the *Odyssey* or of *Beowulf* carry upon them the strong impress of reality.

All these qualities, taken in connection with the unpretending literary art of the epic, make it a form of remarkable directness and impressiveness. Yet it is without conscious ethical or patriotic aim, its lessons lying upon the surfaces of its occurrences and characters — implicit only, in the facts and experiences it depicts. The best — the most representative — epics, it would follow, are those which show most completely this simplicity of outlook and intention. Such are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer, and the epics of the Germanic peoples — the " sagas " of the Norse and Icelandic tribes, and the *Beowulf* of our own early literature. These northern epics, though centuries later than the original forms of the Homeric poems, belong to the same stage of culture as that represented in the ancient Greek epics.

It is beyond our scope to give anything more than these external details as to the epic form. Fragmentary quotation can convey no idea of its excel-

lencies — all of which are definitely a part of its length and of the breadth of its social vision. To really "get" these qualities one must read at least some hundreds of lines of a poem such as the *Iliad* or *Beowulf*.

The epic in more developed cultures becomes both sophisticated and diluted. In the *Æneid* of the Romans, in Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, the ruggedness and plainness of the genuine epic gives place to the cultivation of new ideas of national life, the deliberate glorification of national heroes, and the artificial tone of imitative literary taste. To this type of poem we generally apply the term "Literary Epic."

The lyric. — A lyric differs from narrative poetry in dealing with simple ideas or sensations, not with stories or with situations that demand lengthy or detailed treatment. One may think of a narrative poem as involving a sequence in time, one event following another, as in Wordsworth's *Michael* or Tennyson's *Princess*. In a related way there is in descriptive poetry, like Whittier's *Snowbound*, or Burns's *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, a necessary and prolonged development of the scenes and situations that pass successively before us. In the lyric, however, the idea or emotion conveyed has no expansion in time or space. When the poem adequately reveals the writer's state of mind, it is finished. The effect created is that of a single and unified impression; and it must, therefore, be short and concentrated. One can scarcely set definite limits to the

length of a lyric, of course, yet it would be safe to say that the majority of accepted lyrics are from ten to a hundred lines in length. In form they cover the entire range of rhythmic schemes, rime patterns, and structure, for the distinguishing feature of the lyric is its mood, and nothing else. It might be said in passing that the old definition of the lyric — that it is a poem meant to be sung — has scarcely any application to the present use of the word. Not one lyric in a hundred today is written to be sung.

The distinguishing brevity and conspicuous unity of idea and treatment in the lyric may be seen in Byron's

There be none of Beauty's daughters
With a magic like Thee;
And like music on the waters
Is thy sweet voice to me:
When, as if its sound were causing
The charmed ocean's pausing,
The waves lie still and gleaming,
And the lull'd winds seem dreaming.

And the midnight moon is weaving
Her bright chain o'er the deep
Whose breast is gently heaving
As an infant's asleep:
So the spirit bows before thee
To listen and adore thee;
With a full but soft emotion,
Like the swell of Summer's ocean.

This is a perfect example of lyric quality, developing briefly a single idea through simple imagery. Such

a lyric idea may of course be developed without any appeal whatever to the senses, however, as we see in Shelley's

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdain'd
For thee to disdain it.

One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love;
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not;

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

On the other hand, the theme of a lyric may be conveyed in so wholly objective a way that it seems like a snatch of narrative; yet if the poem is actually lyric in mood, the informing idea emerges conspicuously from the story; the point of the poem lies in the emotion aroused, and it has the central and single interest of the lyric. Instances of this may be found in Wordsworth's *Reverie of Poor Susan*, in Scott's *Proud Maisie Is in the Wood*, and in the lyric from Tennyson's *Princess* which we print below.

Home they brought her warrior dead:
She nor swooned, nor uttered cry:
All her maidens, watching, said
She must weep or she will die.

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Called him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stepped,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee —
Like summer tempest came her tears —
"Sweet my child, I live for thee."

Generally speaking, the idea of the lyric must appear upon its surface. Successful lyrics are not as a rule written in the form of story and moral application (as is, for example Longfellow's *Village Blacksmith*), for then the didactic conclusion tends to destroy the singleness of effect. Yet even this can be done, as we find in Robert Herrick's *To Daffodils*, and in the poem below by Austin Dobson:

A FANCY FROM FONTENELLE

The Rose in the garden slipped her bud,
And she laughed in the pride of her youthful blood,
As she thought of the Gardener standing by —
"He is old, — so old! And he soon must die!"

The full Rose waxed in the warm June air,
And she spread and spread till her heart lay bare;
And she laughed once more as she heard his tread —
"He is older now! He will soon be dead!"

But the breeze of the morning blew, and found
That the leaves of the blown Rose strewed the ground;
And he came at noon, that Gardener old,
And he raked them softly under the mould.

And I wove the thing to a random rhyme,
For the Rose is Beauty, the Gardener, Time.

Conventional lyric forms. — There are various conventional types of lyric, the most familiar of which in English literature are the Ode, the Elegy, and the Sonnet. In the Ode and the Elegy we have some of the longest poems admitted within the definition of the lyric, Milton's *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, including from a hundred and twenty-five to two hundred and fifty lines each. Shelley's *Adonais*, an elegy, is all but five hundred lines long — so long that its effect is certainly too sustained to allow it to fall easily within the customary definition of the lyric.

The Ode. — The Ode has been called a "poetical oration"; that is, a poem written in the form of an address of compliment or commendation. The titles of some of Wordsworth's odes — *To Lycoris*, *To Duty*, and *On the Intimations of Immortality* just mentioned — would show that such a poem may be

addressed directly to a particular person, or to a personified idea or moral conception, or to the reader generally upon some subject of discourse. The tone of the ode is always elevated, a fact which accounts for its lessening popularity today, when we are less attracted by literary elegance. Since the singular features of the ode are its formal manner and its eloquence, and since there are no poems of the type that are really short, we may illustrate its point of view and tone sufficiently by quoting only the first and last stanzas of Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind:*

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes! O thou
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed
The wingéd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill:
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and Preserver; Hear, oh hear!

. . . . . .

Make my thy lyre, ev'n as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,
Like wither'd leaves, to quicken a new birth:
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

The Elegy. — The Elegy is a formal lament, always of elevated tone, like the Ode, and generally of some length and elaborateness. It may commemorate someone actually dead, as Milton's *Lycidas* does his college-mate, Edward King, and as Shelley's *Adonais* does Keats. Or it may, more rarely, have no single personal object; Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* commemorates a past generation. By its very nature an elegy is stately and serious, its movement slow, its diction dignified. It often — in lengthier examples almost always — presents reflections of a general sort arising from the prospect of death, and sometimes — in *Lycidas*, for instance — is made the vehicle for feelings or views which are connected only indirectly with the subject of the poem. The greatest instance of this is Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, a noble poem of unequaled length for an elegy, extending altogether beyond the compass of lyric verse, and commemorating the death of his dearest friend, Arthur Henry Hallam. In the course of this poem, which was composed over a period of years, Tennyson presents

not only the successive moods of grief which followed upon his bereavement, but their effect upon his convictions and hopes, so that we have in this elegy really a complete personal philosophy, as well as an intimate and affecting view of the writer's emotions. The characteristic tone of the elegy may be judged from the opening stanza of William Watson's *Lacrimae Musarum*, written upon the death of Tennyson:

> Low, like another's, lies the laurelled head:
> The life that seemed a perfect song is o'er:
> Carry the last great bard to his last bed.
> Land that he loved, thy noblest voice is mute.
> Land that he loved, that loved him! nevermore
> Meadow of thine, smooth lawn, or wild sea-shore,
> Gardens of odorous bloom and tremulous fruit,
> Or woodlands old, like Druid couches spread,
> The master's feet shall tread.
> Death's little rift hath rent the faultless lute:
> The singer of undying songs is dead.

The Sonnet. — The Sonnet is the most familiar of all conventional verse-forms. It is a narrowly restricted pattern of fourteen pentameter lines, with a definite rime-scheme. There are, however, in the matter of rime, two quite distinct types of sonnet. The older is known as the Italian or Petrarchan. It came into so great vogue during the Renaissance that the writing of a sonnet came to be considered almost as a gentleman's accomplishment. The rime-sequence in the fourteen lines of the Petrarchan sonnet may be indicated by the letters *a b b a, a b b a,*

c d c, d c d; and is adequately illustrated in this sonnet by Wordsworth:

TO SLEEP

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky,

By turns have all been thought of, yet I lie
Sleepless; and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees,
And the first Cuckoo's melancholy cry.

Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth;
So do not let me wear tonight away:
Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth?
Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

It will be seen that the first eight lines of this sonnet are really two quatrains with enclosed rimes, (*a b b a, a b b a*) and that the last six lines rime alternately (*cd, cd, cd*). The first eight lines are called the *octave*, the last six the *sestet;* and the sestet may present any of a number of variants on either two or three rimes as *cde, cde*; *cdc, eed*; *cdc, dee*; *cdc, ede*). It will also be seen that the octave develops an idea to a definite close, and that the sestet is an enlargement or comment upon the sense of the octave. This correspondence between the divisions of the rime scheme and the divisions of thought is organic in the

sonnet, but may be adhered to more or less strictly. In the sonnet just quoted the correspondence of verse scheme and divisions of thought is of course absolutely exact, but in the following one by Milton the break in sense occurs in the middle of the last line of the octave, instead of between octave and sestet.

ON HIS BLINDNESS

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide, —
Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?
I fondly ask: — But Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies; God doth not need
Either man's work, or His own gifts: who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best: His state

Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest: —
They also serve who only stand and wait.

This is by no means an unusual effect, for in English use the sonnet has tended to depart more or less from the merely mechanical accommodation of the sense to the rime-arrangement.

Shortly after the sonnet reached England, just before the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, its original Italian form underwent a number of

changes, chiefly in the substitution of alternate inclosed rimes, and in the working toward a climax in the closing lines. In a short time this newer form became an altogether different instrument from the Italian type, reaching its greatest effectiveness in the hands of Shakespeare. The Shakespearian type, which furnishes the rime scheme, — *abab, cdcd, efef, gg,* — may be illustrated by this sonnet of Shakespeare's.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove: —

O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out ev'n to the edge of doom: —

If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

The differences in rime-sequence are productive of sharp differences in the effect of this type of sonnet. In the first place, the two quatrains which form the octave of the Petrarchan sonnet are not tied together in the Shakespearian form by a single set of rimes. And this choice of a new set of rimes for the second

quatrain follows through into still another set of rimes for the third. The result is that the flow of sense is not checked at the end of the octave, as it is in the Petrarchan type, but is continuous throughout three quatrains, leaving only two lines — a rimed couplet — at the end. These features in its structure bring about a resultant change in its logic; the idea is developed through the three quatrains, and the final couplet is used for a short and epigrammatic application or summary. Since Shakespeare's time the vogue of this type has decreased, most writers of sonnets from Milton on preferring the older and more widely used form.

Sonnets not infrequently appear in sequences of fifty or a hundred with a continuity of theme which may in some cases amount even to the telling of a complete story. In such sequences the sonnets are more than mere stanzas; each stands alone as a perfect unit of thought, though it also serves as a step in the development of a larger narrative scheme. Shakespeare's sonnets are written in a loose narrative sequence, obscure in many matters of detail. Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and Rossetti's *House of Life* are typical sequences of more definite narrative content.

We need not be much concerned with the fact that the sonnet has at times been regarded as a mere exercise of poetical skill. In Italy during the Renaissance it was almost traditionally associated with that affected passion which was conventionalized from

the medieval chivalric worship of woman. When the sonnet reached England, it became in much the same way a vehicle for poetical ingenuity, even in the hands of Shakespeare. Since Milton's time, however, it has been written with genuine interest in its possibilities as a brief and orderly medium for the development of poetical ideas, particularly when they have an intellectual cast, and the fact that it is always a study in severe compression makes its mastery more, and not less, a test of artistic skill.

BOOKS OF REFERENCE ON POETRY

In connection with any study of the mechanics of poetry, it is well to read some treatment of the question of poetic appeal. Probably none is generally better than Max Eastman's *The Enjoyment of Poetry* (Scribner, 1913), an unpretentious and unacademic discussion of poetry in its relation to the mind and the emotions.

For a more extended handling of poetical form and types, see Jay B. Hubbell and John O. Beaty's *An Introduction to Poetry* (Macmillan, 1922). This volume is superior to most others of the sort because it includes an adequate treatment of theories of verse of the last ten to twenty years. Raymond M. Alden's *An Introduction to Poetry* (Henry Holt, 1909), is a very thorough and careful discussion of poetical art, poetical types, æsthetic problems and English metres, but is somewhat lacking in up-to-dateness. Slighter treatments of the technique of English verse may be found in Hiram Corson's *A Primer of English Verse* (Ginn, 1892), and Charles F. Johnson's *Forms of English Poetry* (American Book Co., 1904).

THE ESSAY AND RELATED PROSE FORMS

In poetry, in the drama, in narrative prose, our judgment of a piece of writing is determined largely by the writer's competency in the performance, and not primarily by the nature of his subject. This is due to the very warrantable view that writing which involves a conscious artistic aim is rejected as literature only if its creator lacks the magic to achieve his aim. In the field of prose discourse, however, we are constantly likely to skirt that boundary between the literary and the non-literary which is fixed by the nature of the subject matter itself, as well as by the character of the artist's performance. Here we encounter that classic distinction of De Quincey's between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power: "The function of the first is to teach; the function of the second is to move: the first is a rudder; the second, an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the mere discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding, or reason, but always through affections of pleasure and sympathy."

Literary prose. — That the distinction is not clear-cut is at once evident when we apply the test to certain domains of prose. We do not think of political argument as primarily literary, yet we acknowledge

that Burke's force, sincerity, picturesqueness, and unfailing command of phrase, lift his speeches upon questions of government into the plane of literature. Art-criticism, history, certainly political economy, would seem by their nature to have only very uncertain relations to the purposes of literature; yet we unhesitatingly accept as literary performances Ruskin's *Modern Painters* and *Stones of Venice*, Macaulay's *History of England*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and Carlyle's *Past and Present*. Still more, in a field of writing so strictly informative as biological science, we are willing to admit to the literary canon Huxley's essays on *A Piece of Chalk* and *Man's Place in Nature*, not for any extraordinary grace or happiness in his dealing with his subject, but for their penetration, scientific imagination, and clarity. Can we not, then, set it down as a fact that in almost any field of interest that is not wholly devoid of appeal to the imagination and of connection with the larger things of life, we can regard any presentation that makes those human interests vivid, or that brings home the eternal significance of things, as, for those very reasons, literary?

Yet even if we admit that exceptionally cogent and moving treatment of a subject that is not in itself literary may produce a work of literary quality, we still may recognize a distinction between prose discourse that is, so to speak, literary by accident, and that which is literary by design, or by purposed and effective use of the various forms of literary

appeal. To the great number of historical and biographical writings, letters, works of exposition, and the like to which we give the name of literature because of a particular strength or grace in their handling, we need to give no extended attention; for a study of their effectiveness is in large part a study of qualities of style. They are the literature of knowledge in the best possible dress. But examining De Quincey's definition of the literature of power, we find that we have worthy and interesting matter for study in those works of prose which take a higher literary place because their aim is not only, or not at all, to expound or convince, but to interest or entertain. First among these is the prose essay.

The essay. — The etymology of the word "essay" defines it for us as a trial or an experiment. It is in fact an artistic experiment — to evolve the interest of a subject, grave or light, through a presentation of the writer's opinions about it or response to it. This means, in a way, that it is more or less the aim of the essay to talk *about* the subject rather than *through* it. Its aim is to be suggestive, not exhaustive. The treatment, therefore, is guided by complete literary consciousness. The author cannot attract his readers without taking thought to the literary means of doing so. His first obligation must be a perfect happiness and nicety of phrase — and a fitness of phrase for the nature and mood of the subject. If we take one of Bacon's sober discourses,

like the brief one *Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature*, and one of Lamb's intimate and gossipy essays — say *The Praise of Chimney Sweepers* — we might discover something of the range within which the essay moves, and something of that indispensable adaptation of style and method to the nature of the subject. We can at the outset of such a comparison draw a distinction between the sound substance and orderly manner of Bacon, and the haphazard and chatty fashion of Lamb. The first type (Bacon's) we sometimes refer to as the discursive or the expository essay, and the second type (Lamb's) as the polite, the familiar, or the literary essay.

Most of Bacon's essays are bits of well considered philosophy built about simple ideas, such as Truth, Friendship, Ambition, Discourse, Counsel, and Travel. While the point of view is always personal judgment, they nevertheless embody in the main a fund of general wisdom. Their first virtue, then, is their real weight as observations upon life, society, and experience. Commonly Bacon opens with a single sentence or so which makes his view clear. In *Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature* he begins:

> I take Goodness in this sense: the affecting of the weal of men, which is what the Grecians called Philanthropia; and the word Humanity (as it is used) is a little too light to express it. Goodness I call the Habit, and Goodness of Nature the Inclination. This of all Virtues and Dignities of Mind is the greatest, being the character of the Deity; and without it, man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing, no better than a kind of vermin.

So he continues, with canny and sometimes quaint illustrations —

As it is seen in the Turks, a cruel people, who nevertheless are kind to beasts, and give alms to dogs and birds; in so much as a Christian boy in Constantinople had like to have been stoned for gagging, in a waggishness, a long billed fowl.

Neither give thou Æsop's cock a gem, who would be better pleased, and happier, if he had had a barley corn.

He leans strongly to aphorism — compact scraps of worldly wisdom:

Seek the good of other men, but be not in bondage to their faces or fancies.

And he discriminates finely in his applications of old truths:

Beware how, in making the portraiture, thou breakest the pattern; for Divinity maketh the love of ourselves the pattern; the love of our neighbors but the portraiture. *Sell that Thou hast, and give it to the poor and follow me.* But sell not all thou hast, unless thou come and follow me; that is, except thou have a Vocation, wherein thou mayest do as much good with little means as with great.

He concludes with a set of rather elegant little comparisons, rhetorical, but charged with understanding:

If a man be gracious, and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands. . . . If he easily pardons and remits offences, it shows that his mind is planted above injuries, so that he cannot be shot. . . . But above all, if he have St. Paul's perfection, that he would wish to be an Anathema (offering) from

Christ . . . it shows much of a divine nature, and a conformity with Christ himself.

Occasionally Bacon drifts into the more personal tone, where his subject is less severe — in *Of Building* and *Of Gardens*, for example — but his typical manner is imbued with the quality of reflective interest which calls for plain wisdom rather than refined literary grace.

It is quite otherwise with Lamb, whose humanity keeps his flight nearer the earth. He does not deal sententiously with abstract topics, but selects picturesque episodes or characters or conditions and weaves about them interests and associations that make them exquisite and fascinating. Even his humorous touches have refinement, as in the *Dissertation on Roast Pig;* and the pathos of *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago* is not spoiled by moral indignation. The artfulness of his intimacy with the reader is self-evident. It is as though he sat opposite him in conversation.

I like to meet a sweep — understand me — not a grown sweeper — old chimney-sweepers are by no means attractive — but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek — such as come forth with the dawn or somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the *peep, peep* of a young sparrow. Or like to the matin lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sunrise? I have a kindly yearning toward these dim specks — poor blots — innocent blacknesses —

There follows a disquisition upon the virtues of sassafras tea to the palate of the sweep, pursued with deliberate garrulity, and in a style which burlesques the pretentious diction of the late eighteenth century:

I know not by what particular conformation of the organ it happens, but I have always found that this composition is surprisingly gratifying to the palate of a young chimney-sweeper — whether the oily particles (sassafras is slightly oleaginous) do attenuate and soften the fuliginous concretions, which are sometimes found (in dissections) to adhere to the roof of the mouth in these unfledged practitioners; or whether Nature, sensible that she had mingled too much of bitter wood in the lot of these raw victims, caused to grow out of the earth her sassafras for a sweet lenitive.

There is more upon their humor — "such a maximum of glee, and minimum of mischief"; their teeth — "like some remnant of gentry not quite extinct; a badge of better days; a hint of nobility"; a bit of illustrative story, and in conclusion a spirited description of Jem White's annual supper to the sweeps at St. Bartholomew's Fair.

The guests assembled about seven. In those little temporary parlors three tables were spread with napery, not so fine as substantial, and at every board a comely hostess presided with her pan of hissing sausages. The nostrils of the young rogues dilated at the savor.

It is good fun, yet with a sweet and unpatronizing sympathy. It teaches nothing, though it is filled with compassion; it forces no sentiment, but invites

kindly thought. And its permanent charm is, after all, just the easy and becoming way in which we are made to feel the humor of the writer. Possibly no English essayist is regarded as more classic than Lamb, that is, more typical of the essayist at his best; no one, at any rate, has possessed a quainter imagination, or a surer or smoother touch in the rendering of it.

Range of the essay type. — The dashes of narrative in Lamb's essays — the *Dissertation on Roast Pig* is wholly narrative — are quite in keeping with the tradition if they but serve to illustrate the subject, and are not merely underdone stories. In Addison and Steele the narrative element often takes more substantial proportions, but it always serves, definitely, nevertheless, as a pleasant and natural way of evolving a central theme. Many of the "Sir Roger de Coverley papers," for instance, are discourses upon men and manners clarified and accentuated by story-interest. There is, too, an entire class of essays in which the usual formally discursive treatment yields to a method almost wholly descriptive. Here again the subject suggests the handling. In Lowell's *My Garden Acquaintance* the fashion of the thing may be seen — simply polite chat about the habits and seasons and homes of his bird neighbors. The bulk of Thoreau's writing is of much the same substance and temper. In Irving's *Westminster Abbey* or Stevenson's *Amateur Emigrant*, we have the same sort of performance applied

to different purposes. Here again the secret of success with the essay is that the pressure of interest shall come from the writer's fancy for, or taste for, or reaction to, the thing described — that it shall be something more, and more personal, than a mere study of visible effects in nature, in architecture, in foreign travel, or what not. We see, then, that the content of the essay may embrace anything from the most abstract to the most concrete subjects (ethical principles or aspects of social interest on the one hand, as in Bacon or Emerson, and men, places, incidents on the other, as in Steele, Goldsmith, and Lamb) and that the manner of treatment may vary over a wide range of effects in both type and style.

When we come to deal with the biographical or critical or historical essay, we are visibly moving toward the boundary between the essay, properly speaking, and the informative prose discussion. Whether or not the writer can subordinate the greater importance of facts in these fields, at any rate the value of his work is likely to lie first of all in its measure of truth and precision, and such considerations must naturally limit the spread of his purely personal impressions. A piece of writing, therefore, like the series of sketches of great men in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, like Lowell's *Shakespeare Once More*, Arnold's *Wordsworth*, or Carlyle's *Burns*, is an agreeable essay for almost the single reason that the personal estimate in such writings takes apparent

precedence over the mere parade of facts. On the other hand, Macaulay's historical or biographical essays, those, for instance, on *Dr. Johnson* or *Clive*, are sometimes so packed with the mere detail of the subject that they may be called essays merely because they have the scope, picturesqueness, and individual outlook that define the type.

It is almost unnecessary to say that the prose essay can be effectual only as long as there is a flexible prose to sustain it. Bacon's essays were written when verse was more cultivated as literary speech than prose. Prose was only the useful servant of ideas. So whatever the virtues of Bacon's style, they are not the virtues of superlative clearness or fluidity. One cannot escape the feeling that his phrases are muscle-bound. A century later, in Addison and Steele, the language is more flexible, but still formal; and as the eighteenth century develops, Johnson's prose becomes more notably Latin, both in structure and in diction, and not a little pedantic. This is the climax of the tradition of the "elegant" essay. Lamb is by contrast infinitely easier and more pleasing, for he moves in that current of freer and less pretentious phrase that comes in with the nineteenth century. These matters of prose style are of course considerations which apply to the entire field of literary effort in prose, in fiction, and the drama, as well as in the essay; yet the character of written prose has a special weight in our critical judgment of the essay for the simple reason that the force

or charm of this type is so dependent upon the mastery of language.

The classical form of essay since Lamb's time has been developed largely in the groove that he worked to its proper depth. On the whole it must be said that the possibilities of the essay have improved not only with the betterment of prose as a literary instrument, but with the greater currency of general ideas. Arthur C. Benson, Samuel McChord Crothers, Miss Agnes Repplier, are all inheritors of Lamb's tradition, but all three show more contact than Lamb with the world of realities. It must be admitted, however, that there are not a few readers of the present who consider that the vein of the polite essay has been worked down to unproductive clay, and that its virtues are now largely imitative. At any rate, this type of essay seems to be confined largely today to what are rather maliciously called the "highbrow" magazines.

The essay today. — Latterly the essay has tended to take the tone of our age, with its journalistic jauntiness and its preoccupation with paradox and challenging phrase. As outstanding examples of this newer tradition we might select Gilbert K. Chesterton's *On Running after One's Hat* (from *All Things Considered*), and *On Certain Modern Writers and the Institution of the Family* (from *Heretics*). These are prime examples of at bottom serious purpose supported by clever quibbles, comical banter, and a more or less consistent avoidance of direct

logic and sense. They are diverting, but appeal to the easy-going mental habits of those who are not "all eyes" when they read. Max Beerbohm has a still lighter touch, and has the added virtue of being superior to the use of word-magic for the exploitation of sophistical or insufficiently considered ideas.

Informative literature. — It remains to consider very briefly the relation of literary art to the various branches of informative writing which seem to yield to the influence of real literary interest. Omitting history, science, and the like, in which, as we have seen, a rare happiness or clarity of treatment may invest useful writing with merits of a special sort, there remain biography, oratory, and letters, as types that are in themselves felt to possess special possibilities of literary interest.

Biography. — Biography is as much a form of story-telling, truthful story-telling, of course, as it is discursive prose. It is one of the commonest forms of literary endeavor — yet, in view of its mass, rather remarkably without monumental achievement in the literary point of view. Even in that special domain of biography in which the writer has the unique advantage of surveying himself from within — that is, in autobiography — there are relatively few memorable examples. One might almost number on his fingers all the first-rate autobiographies ever written. Part of this situation is of course explained by the ephemeral importance of all but the most conspicuous figures of an age. As time goes on,

interest naturally weakens in the mere background of events; and it takes the highest personal qualities in the subject to sustain interest. At the most, too, the biographer can do no more than full justice to his subject; and possibly the element of literary interest in a biography is in proportion to what the writer suggests that is not contained in the bare facts of a life. Macaulay's speculation as to what the world would have thought of Johnson if he had never had a Boswell, has much pertinency; for the figure that Johnson made before the world of his time was not so impressive. What Boswell did was to reveal by his day to day record of Johnson's goings and comings and conversation, the fineness and the compassion that underlay a somewhat tyrannous and pedantic exterior. The value of this service is quite out of proportion to the triviality of much of Boswell's detail.

On the other hand, when we compare such a formless but wholly personal biography with two such reputable literary lives as Lockhart's *Life of Scott* and Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*, we find that a much more perfect sense of literary management avails very little to make the personality of the subject of a biography more interesting than in the eyes of contemporaries. Franklin's *Autobiography* — and Benvenuto Cellini's — stands on somewhat the same ground as Boswell's *Johnson* in power to bring the figure before the eye. Like Boswell, both Cellini and Franklin wrote with little literary pretension,

and with rather imperfect judgment as to the really big and the really little. Yet we should not do well to judge that the simplicity and directness of Boswell and Franklin are the whole secret of the charm that they exert; for the bones of many a "plain" biography lie bleaching on the sands of time.

The literary value of biography might stand at its very highest where there is no obligation on the part of the writer to present any but his own impressions of the things of significance in the life of his subject. Needless to say, this is likely to be completely true only when the importance of the subject himself does not impose a narrowly prescribed treatment. It is the case, for example, in that exquisite memoir of Barrie's mother to which he gives the title *Margaret Ogilvie*. It is true also of the presentation of the great figures of the Jewish race in Zangwill's *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, and of Emerson's strictly faithful but judicious biographical sketch of his friend Thoreau. Biographical writing of this sort simply rises by its selective method and its rare tone to the level of the essay. It is, in fact, a part distinctly of the essay tradition.

There is a particular line of stress in contemporary biography that has its connection with our emphasis upon the social relations rather than upon the circumstances of life. In such recent autobiographies as Jacob Riis's *The Making of An American*, and in *The Education of Henry Adams*, the light is turned inwards, and away from the mere passage of men

and events. Another characteristic change in the modern biography is the extent to which it is influenced by the skeptical tone and the ironic manner — Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* and *Eminent Victorians* are conspicuous cases in point.

Diaries and letters. — Much of what we have said in general about biography has its plain application to such half-literary forms as diaries and letters. The literary intention in such writings is, as a matter of fact, almost always present in some degree. It has been aptly said that no one has ever written a diary without his eye upon a possible second reader; and more or less conscious literary purpose is quite transparently present in any sustained correspondence. It is not surprising, then, that particularly in the hands of those acquainted with literary art, letters rise above the facts and the personal relations that occasion them. Gray, for example, and Lamb, Thackeray, Arnold, and Stevenson, wrote letters with something of the same zest for creation that they brought to their strictly professional literary work. The diarist, however, is rather less likely to be burdened with literary consciousness. The immortal Samuel Pepys, in fact, resorted to the precaution of employing what he thought was an unreadable cipher in order that he should be his own sole audience. Yet his journal is so revealing of human nature in aspects both likable and not so likable, that it has an almost absolute preëminence among things of its sort. But what we might call its liter-

ary qualities are clearly the qualities of the man, with little of the effect of cultivated art.

Oratory. — Oratory, though appealing first of all through the spoken word, takes its natural place among literary forms because its intention is plainly literary. There is no verbal form of appeal, however, in which fashion has changed more radically the basic views of the objects to be secured and the methods of securing them. The old tradition in oratory, derived from the Greeks and the Romans, was that the orator, somewhat like the poet, caught his hearers up in a magical web of eloquence. The eloquence of Edmund Burke was one of finely balanced sentences, recondite allusions, magniloquent phrases, impressive figures, pictorial effects, and stirring moral passion. In this passage from his speech on *The Nabob of Arcot's Debts*, we see it at its best.

"When at length Hyder Ali found that he had to do with men who either would sign no convention, or whom no treaty and no signature could bind, and who were the determined enemies of human intercourse itself, he decreed to make the country possessed by these incorrigible and predestinated criminals a memorable example to mankind. He resolved, in the gloomy recesses of a mind capacious of such things, to leave the whole Carnatic an everlasting monument of vengeance, and to put perpetual desolation as a barrier between him and those against whom the faith which holds the moral elements of the world together was no protection. . . . Having terminated his disputes with every enemy, and every rival, who buried their mutual animosities in their common detestation

against the creditors of the Nabob of Arcot, he drew from every quarter whatever a savage ferocity could add to his new rudiments in the arts of destruction; and compounding all the materials of fury, havoc, and desolation into one black cloud, he hung for a while on the declivities of the mountains. While the authors of all these evils were idly and stupidly gazing upon this menacing meteor, which blackened all their horizon, it suddenly burst, and poured down the whole of its contents upon the plains of the Carnatic — Then ensued a scene of woe, the like of which no eye had seen, no heart conceived, and which no tongue can adequately tell."

Today this strong reliance upon the devices of rhetoric has all but disappeared. The contrast between Burke's style and the homespun sincerity of Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* tells almost the whole story of the decline of the old oratory:

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a greater sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

The change is accounted for in part by the fact that oratory had, with the spread of education and

of the newspaper, become in the interval between Burke and Webster on the one hand, Lincoln on the other, a less potent appeal to the ear and the emotions. In this interval the spread of the habit of reading had put a higher value upon unpretending directness and truth. In addition, the new incentives to thoughtful citizenship had bred an audience (of readers rather than listeners) who were more critical of substance and less exposed to the fascination of winged words. That development is another mark of our rational age; and the old-fashioned orator will probably never regain his old potency. Yet whatever the causes for the gulf between the manner of Burke and that of Lincoln, their differences of style are differences in the individual response to the principles of their art. So both manners have their bearing upon the range of that art itself.

BOOKS UPON THE ESSAY

Orlo Williams' *The Essay* (Doran, 1915) is an informing handling of the subject, with much of the essayist's grace in its style and approach. Hugh Walker's *The English Essay and Essayists* (Dent) is a thoroughly competent treatment of the historical development of the form.

Waldo H. Dunn's *English Biography* (Dent, 1916) is a weighty but distinctive study of biographical writing from the middle ages to the present.

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